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Byrons romantic celebrity : industrial culture and the hermeneutic of intimacy

BYRON'S ROMANTIC CELEBRITY: INDUSTRIAL CULTURE AND THE HERMENEUTIC OF INTIMACY

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE FACULTY OF ARTS, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, JANUARY 2003.

WORD COUNT: 80,602

Abstract

This thesis argues that modern celebrity culture took shape in the Romantic period, and that Byron should be understood as one of its earliest examples and most astute critics. It investigates the often strained interactions of artistic endeavour and commercial enterprise, the material conditions of Byron's publications, and the place of celebrity culture in the history of the self. It understands celebrity as a cultural apparatus structured by the relations between an individual, an industry and an audience, which emerged at a distinct historical moment. In the Romantic period, it contends, industrialised print culture overcrowded the public sphere with named individuals and alienated cultural producers and consumers. Celebrity tackled the surfeit of public personality by branding an individual's identity to make it amenable to commercial promotion, and palliated the sense of alienation by constructing a hermeneutic of intimacy.

The thesis investigates Byron's engagement with industrial culture, showing how it empowered and embarrassed him. It considers how changes in his sense of audience while writing *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* led Byron to construct the hermeneutic of intimacy in 'To Ianthe'. Byron's celebrity included an important visual dimension, which he fostered in his Turkish Tales. The thesis therefore studies the circulation of his image, in authorised and appropriated versions, and the resulting advantages and anxieties for Byron. It argues that when he tried to move his poetry in a new direction with *Hebrew Melodies*, his attempt was compromised by generic constraints and publishing practices. The legal wrangles of 1816, it contends, made the hermeneutic of intimacy unsustainable. When he returned to *Childe Harold*, Byron experimented with alternative models of writing and reading. The thesis concludes by considering *Don Juan*, examining Byron's reading of Montaigne and arguing that the importance of celebrity culture in normalising the modern understanding of subjectivity has been underestimated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was made possible by grants from the Arts and Humanities Research Board, which supported me during my M.A. and the first two years of my doctoral research, and a bursary from the Department of English at the University of Bristol, which enabled me to finish it. I have benefited from financial support to attend conferences from: NASSR, the Stephen Copley Postgraduate Awards, the Sheila Birkenhead Memorial Bursaries, the University of Bristol Alumni Foundation and the Maureen Crisp Young Scholars' Fund. I would like to thank Haidee Jackson, Peter Cochran and above all Andrew Nicholson for help with manuscript materials; Donald Shell and David L. Jones, Librarian of the House of Lords, for clarifying parliamentary procedures; Ian Jackson, Paul Douglass, David Conway, Nick Mason and Christine Kenyon Jones for their emails. I owe a larger and more pervasive debt to Tim Webb, Andrew Bennett and all at Bristol, to Cliff Siskin, Robert Miles and all at Glasgow, to Bernard Beatty and to Peter Brennan. I have very much enjoyed being part of postgraduate communities in Bristol and Glasgow and through the International Byron Society. Stephen Cheeke supervised this work with great intelligence and enthusiasm; his support has been indispensable and his comments have been invaluable.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree.

Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.

The dissertation has not been presented to any other University for examination either in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Signed:  Date: 30 January 2003

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TABLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Abbreviated Titles

CPW Lord Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980-93). All quotations from Byron's poetry are from this edition.

CMP Lord Byron, *The Complete Miscellaneous Prose,* ed. by Andrew Nicholson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

BLJ *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. by Leslie A. Marchand, 13 vols (London: John Murray, 1973-94).

RR *The Romantics Reviewed*, ed. by Donald Reiman, 9 vols (London: Garland, 1972) Part B, 5 vols.

HVSV *His Very Self and Voice: Collected Conversations of Lord Byron,* ed. by Ernest J. Lovell (New York: Macmillan, 1954).

ROMANTIC CELEBRITY

This thesis presents one case study in a history that has yet to be adequately written of a phenomenon that has yet to be comprehensively theorised. The experience of celebrity texts is pervasive in contemporary culture, but the very ubiquity of celebrities makes it difficult to see their historical and cultural significance. Celebrities are everywhere. The complex apparatus of celebrity is now so familiar that it seems to be either a distinct characteristic of the modern moment or an expression of universal, ahistorical ambitions and desires.[1] In thrall to the first impression, Suzanne Moore, writing in the *New Statesman* in 1999, expressed alarm at a celebrity obsession that seemed to her to have sprung forth full-grown in late modernity:

> The growth industry of the nineties has been the culture of celebrity [...] There have always been famous people. But the growth of the mass media, particularly in the past decade, has produced an unforeseen worship of the famous that is deeply troubling.[2]

By contrast, Andrew Anthony, writing in *The Observer*, showed an unwarranted confidence that celebrity had always functioned as it does today. "Lord Byron drew hordes of screaming young women. But at least he could write a line or two", he claimed, "[h]is readings drew crowds of adoring women."[3] While Byron certainly did arouse the interest of large numbers of women, they certainly did not gather in screaming crowds, and public readings were unknown until later in the nineteenth century.[4] Why was Moore "deeply troubl[ed]" by a celebrity culture which seemed to her to be "unforeseen"? Why did Anthony indulge in anachronism, inventing readings that never took place and screams that were never heard?

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[1] In Michel Foucault's terms, celebrity is one of the "threads" of modernity, which he describes as a "structure that has not yet been unravelled; we are only just beginning to disentangle a few of the threads, which are still so unknown to us that we immediately assume them to be either marvellously new or absolutely archaic". Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), p. 199.
[2] Suzanne Moore, 'Worshippers at the Shrine of St Tara of Klosters,' *New Statesman*, 22 November 1999, p. 36.
[3] Andrew Anthony, 'Celebrity is Nothing New,' *The Observer, Life Magazine*, 27 January 2002, p. 8.
[4] "I never in my life *read* a composition, save to Hodgson, as he pays me in kind." BLJ III, 206.

Because, although they write in a culture obsessed by celebrities, they lack – we lack – a history of celebrity. This thesis contributes to that history by studying of one of its earliest and brightest stars. In what follows, I make a case for my case study, arguing that modern celebrity emerged in response to the historical conditions of the Romantic period, and that Byron should be viewed as a crucial figure in the phenomenon's history. I understand Byron both as an early example of a celebrity, and as a commentator on and critic of celebrity culture, the artistic constraints that it entails and the assumptions about subjectivity that it supports.

Byron weighed up his own celebrity in his Detached Thoughts, writing "As far as Fame goes (that is to say *living* Fame) I have had my share – perhaps – indeed – *certainly* more than my deserts." He referred to three elements of the celebrity apparatus that will recur in my discussion: an industry, an individual and an audience. He implicitly acknowledged that his fame depended on the industry that reproduced his poems, including an infrastructure that transported them across the world. "Some odd instances have occurred to my own experience" he wrote, "of the wild & strange places to which a name may penetrate, and where it may impress." Industrial publishing enabled his poems to circulate in unprecedented numbers, allowing his words and his name to "penetrate" into "wild & strange places". Triangulating his residence, his readers, and his land's language, he remembered receiving "at Ravenna a letter in *English* verse from *Drontheim* in Norway" (BLJ IX, 24). The epistle's author was one of the readers who made up his international audience. "In the same month" he noted, "I received an invitation into *Holstein* from a Mr. Jacobson (I think) of Hamburgh [sic]". Enclosed were "a translation of Medora's song in the 'Corsair' by a Westphalian Baroness [...] with some original verses of hers (very pretty and Klopstockish) and a prose translation" (BLJ IX, 24). Byron does not present his readers as passive consumers. They produced English verse epistles, translations in prose and verse and poems of their own. They also desired to engage with the celebrity poet in other, non-literary ways. Inviting Byron to visit, they tried to shift their experience of him from the page to the flesh. Inevitably, Byron's thought spiralled in on himself: the

individual in the apparatus. "If I were to present myself at the door of the house where my daughter now is" he wrote, "the door would be shut in my face". But if he went to "the furthest town in Norway", he would be "received with open arms into the mansions of Strangers and foreigners". Byron opposed two kinds of intimacy, textual and familial, and the passage is haunted by the thought that it may be impossible to have both. "As far as *Fame* goes – I have had my share – it has indeed been leavened by other human contingencies [...] but on the whole I take it that such equipoise is the condition of humanity" (BLJ IX, 24). As the individual at the heart of the celebrity apparatus, Byron suggested, the best he could hope for was "equipoise" between the consolations of celebrity and the pain it seemed to bring with it.

The combination of an individual, an industry and an audience that Byron referred to would become hard-wired into celebrity culture. The *Portfolio* used the same terms, noting first a responsive audience who found the poet personally fascinating:

> Indeed it is the real romance of [Byron's] life, immeasurably more than the fabled one of his pen, which the public expects to find in his pages, and which not so much engages its sympathy, as piques its curiosity, and feeds thought and conversation.
>
> (RR V, 1966)

It then asserted that as an individual Byron was affected by the demands of this audience: "The Noble Poet, in the mean time, is content with – it should be said is ambitious of – this species of distinction". Finally, it pointed out the existence of a diverse industry, whose primary motive was pecuniary: "the booksellers, printers, and stationers, all profit by the traffic to which the exhibition gives rise; and thus every party is a gainer in this remarkable phenomenon of the time" (RR V, 1966). Thomas Macaulay lambasted that remarkable phenomenon in 1831, restating the same three elements. "Among that large class of young persons whose reading is almost entirely confined to works of imagination," he wrote, "the popularity of Lord Byron was unbounded." They were devoted consumers and imitators:

> They bought pictures of him; they treasured up the smallest relics of him; they learned his poems by heart, and did their best to write like him, and to look like him. Many of them practised at the glass, in the hope of catching the curl of the upper lip, and the scowl of the brow, which appear in some of his portraits. A few discarded their neckcloths, in imitation of their great leader.[5]

These fans engaged with the celebrity individual through industrially produced and commercially marketed images. They actively appropriated and employed these products, which influenced their fashions, learning and writing, and even, according to Macaulay, impacted on their bodies.

I contend that any analysis of modern celebrity should take account of these three elements, operating within a conceptual triangle whose vertices are an industry, an individual and an audience. Definitions may avoid confusion. An industry may be defined for the purpose of this thesis as an arrangement of available technology, human effort and skill in order to produce and distribute multiple copies, in large numbers, of a commodity which need not refer back to any "original". An individual, in this case, refers to an agent with discernible but significantly circumscribed potential to enact his or her will.[6] The celebrity subject actuates the whole structure of celebrity, but in doing so enters a feedback loop in which the celebrity experience affects his or her self-understanding, so that neither self nor celebrity can be conceptually quarantined from the other. The non-celebrity does not survive unchanged within the celebrity apparatus, neither does the apparatus operate without reference to the subject at its core. However hard critics try to shake off their post-Romantic embarrassment at Byron's ante-mortem popularity, celebrity is not detachable. The individual may, however, be concerned to defend a "celebrity-free" space within his or her self-understanding, a kernel that appears to be authentic because it remains untouched by celebrity. An audience here means a large assortment of people, with some degree of group identity however weak. They take

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[5] Cited in *Byron: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Andrew Rutherford (London: Routledge, 1970), pp. 315-16.

[6] On this point I concur with Joe Moran, who seeks to identify "some degree of situated agency for authors, without reverting to an uninflected intentionalist stance which risks replicating the assumptions of celebrity itself." Joe Moran, *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), p. 10.

possession of celebrity texts and interpret them in creative ways. These responses are unauthorised by the celebrity individual or the industry, and beyond their control, although the industry may attempt to police them in various ways. The audience's responses are acts of self-fashioning: the kind of person an audience member understands her- or himself to be becomes influenced by the kind of person he or she understands the celebrity to be. And this is not simply emulation, which Macaulay criticises, but may also be critique, which he practices. I will suggest that existing theories of celebrity have skewed the triangle of industry, individual and audience towards one or other of its vertices, and misunderstood the historical emergence of the modern celebrity apparatus.

Until recently much writing on celebrity was hagiographic. It represented the celebrity's public profile as the well-deserved result of their talent and determination and the seemingly magical crystallisation of their personal qualities. These premises made such writing an extension of the celebrity industry that reproduced its agenda and skewed the frame of reference towards the individual.[7] A structuralist corrective emerged, which understands hagiography to mystify celebrity's ideological work as a cultural formation. Critics such as Joshua Gamson and P. David Marshall performed a strategic shift, bracketing the experience of the celebrity individual in order to focus on the phenomenon's cultural scaffolding.[8] Taking individuals out of the frame, they centred commercial and conceptual structures. Marshall employs a "double hermeneutic", considering both "intention" and "reception".[9] He locates intention not in the individual but in the culture industry and scans the horizons of Iser and Jauss for insights into audience response. This kind of approach has usefully drawn attention to the wider cultural ramifications of the celebrity apparatus, highlighting ways in which it

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[7] That slanted view helped the industry to remain invisible, and, as Kotler, Rein and Stoller note, it "has a vested interest in maintaining its own *invisibility*." Philip Kotler, Irving Rein and Martin Stoller, *High Visibility: The Making and Marketing of Professionals into Celebrities* (Chicago: NTC Business Books, 1997), p. 9.
[8] Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (London: University of California Press, 1994), P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
[9] See Marshall, pp. 36-37.

helps to form or deform the polity. Celebrities may be best understood to be what Marshall, Gamson and Moran variously call a "bridge of meaning", "built on major [...] fault lines" or "a contested area of cultural production".[10] Forming an important node of cultural concerns, celebrities connect producers and consumers, elite and popular pursuits, high and low culture, bourgeois individualism and proletarian collectivity, cultural capital and hard cash.

While the structuralist approach has been productive, its roots in a corrective to the hagiographic tradition left their mark. The structuralists swung too far the other way, skewing the interpretative triangle towards the industry and away from the individual. This swing left celebrity's critics programmatically unable to ask certain vital questions. Bracketing the individual out of the investigation made it impossible to develop an account of the limits that impose on the celebrity's agency and the tactics he or she develops to function within those limits. These questions are important because the celebrity experiences the subjective trauma of commodity capitalism in a particularly acute fashion. He is both a producer of commodities and himself, in a sense, a commodity. Seeing his image return in industrially mediated forms, the celebrity's experience goes beyond the standard Marxist diagnosis of alienation to become self-alienation.[11] Bracketing celebrity subjectivity may give the impression that identity remains unchanged by celebrity. But subjectivity is not an extrinsic component for the critic to plug in once his or her understanding of the celebrity apparatus is complete. Instead, celebrity has a major and potentially catastrophic effect on the celebrity individual's self-understanding. The historical emergence of celebrity also connects to the normalisation of

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[10] Marshall, p. 49, Gamson, p. 11, Moran, p. 6. Moran employs Bourdieu's terms to argue that the celebrity author in contemporary America "represents both cultural capital and a marketable commodity" and exists "between the restricted and extended subfields" of cultural production, p. 6.

[11] See Ghislaine McDayter, 'Conjuring Byron: Byromania, Literary Commodification and the Birth of Celebrity' in *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Culture*, ed. by Frances Wilson (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 43-62. Andrew Elfenbein similarly notes that "Byron the celebrity was a peculiar commodity because the 'thing' that gave value to his products was his subjectivity." Andrew Elfenbein, *Byron and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 48.

certain modern ideas about subjectivity. Celebrity impacts not only on the selfhood of the celebrity, but on conceptions of selfhood itself. Considering the poetic techniques of Byron's writing, the material conditions of his publications and the reception of his work by contemporary readers enables me to give all three corners of the interpretative triangle their due.

The other shortcoming of the structuralist approaches to celebrity that I seek to move beyond is their lack of a sufficient historical dimension. Marshall, Gamson and Moran are all concerned with contemporary culture, and their sketches of the historical emergence of celebrity are necessarily brief and provisional.[12] My use of the term "apparatus" is significant here because it encompasses the individual, the industry and the audience that combine to produce the celebrity phenomenon and acknowledges that these elements come together at a specific historical moment. Brecht uses the term (*apparat* in German) to refer to the physical conditions of production in the opera, the theatre or the press, which proceed unquestioned and impose their logic on the work produced.[13] Foucault extends the term (*dispositif* in French) to refer to "a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble" whose elements are "the said as much as the unsaid" and which consists of "the system of relations that can be established between these elements."[14] Foucault also insists that an apparatus has a history, and is tied to a particular genesis. It is a "formation which has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an *urgent need*."[15] I will argue that the *urgent need* to which the modern apparatus of celebrity responds should be located in the Romantic period, and has not yet been studied.

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[12] As Michael Newbury observes when reviewing Marshall's book (along with two others), "[These authors] do us the crucial service of taking the idea of celebrity seriously. It now remains to understand the historicity of that idea." Michael Newbury, 'Celebrity Watching,' *American Literary History*, 12, no. 1-2 (2000), 272-83 (p. 283).

[13] "[B]y imagining that they have got hold of an apparatus which in fact has got hold of them [musicians, writers and critics] are supporting an apparatus which is out of their control, which is no longer (as they believe) a means of furthering output but has become an obstacle to output, and specifically to their own output as soon as it follows a new and original course which the apparatus finds awkward or opposed to its own aims." Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. by John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang; London: Eyre Methuen, 1978), p. 34.

[14] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, ed. by Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), p. 194.

[15] Ibid. p. 195.

Modern celebrity is different in kind from earlier sorts of fame, and its genesis can be pinned down with some precision. Leo Braudy's magisterial history of fame surveys attitudes to renown stretching back as far as Alexander the Great.[16] While this is enormously valuable for any student of celebrity, the very breadth of its impressive erudition risks downplaying substantive historical differences between kinds of fame. Chris Rojek gestures toward the "major interrelated historical processes" of "democratization", "decline in organised religion" and "the commodification of everyday life" in his attempt to explain celebrity.[17] Such broad brushstrokes are only of limited use. Before attempting to fix the genesis of modern celebrity in the Romantic period, I must briefly consider its existence at other historical moments. One strand of thought links the birth of celebrity to photography and film. Florence Lawrence is a key figure in these accounts. Her fans knew her only as the "Biograph Girl" until 1910, when the publicist Robert Cochrane and the producer Carl Laemmle apparently planted a false report in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* that she had died in a street car accident. A few days later they placed an advertisement in *Moving Picture World*, with a photo, denouncing the first story as a lie and confirming that Lawrence was alive and well and now working for them at IMP.[18] This is one of the earliest examples of the media promotion of a film actor's name and image. Writers who select this episode to mark the beginning of modern celebrity are correct to link celebrity to the cultural impact of new technology. But they are wrong, I think, to fix on film. Given the extent of theatrical and literary celebrity by this period, the emergence of a star system in cinema is better understood as a metamorphosis in an apparatus which already existed in other areas of cultural production. In the late nineteenth century, the proliferation of photographs made the faces of public figures, including

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[16] Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).
[17] Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion, 2001), p. 13.
[18] See Alexander Walker, *Stardom: The Hollywood Phenomenon* (London: Michael Joseph, 1970), pp. 31-39, Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1998), pp. 9-10, Gamson, p. 24, and Marshall, p. 82. Janet Staiger questions the canonical status of this story in film history, and also reproduces the advertisement from *Moving Picture World*. Janet Staiger, 'Seeing Stars' in *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, ed. by Christine Gledhill (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 3-16.

authors, widely recognisable. This coincided with the rise of interviewing as a journalistic form, and an increasing tendency to conduct interviews in the subject's home.[19] These factors, combined with the fashion for authors to give public readings of their work, represent an important development in celebrity's history. But once again this is a metamorphosis rather than a genesis. Photography supersedes the earlier technology of steel-plate engraving, and interviews act for later celebrities as literally hundreds of biographical magazine sketches did for Byron during his lifetime.[20] These accounts assume that the crucial technological change which makes celebrity possible is lens-based. I will argue that the enabling innovations occurred a hundred years earlier, in the technology of printing. Those upheavals produced the conditions of a modern print culture and the distinctly modern forms of public life that accompanied it.

By the same logic, I want to argue that to identify the kinds of fame available in the mid-eighteenth century as modern celebrity is premature. While it may be possible to recognise behaviour that resembles that of modern celebrities, the three elements that form the celebrity apparatus are not yet all in place. Laurence Sterne, for example, has been claimed as an early celebrity.[21] Sterne crafted a persona for social situations and wrote with a conversational immediacy, much like Byron. Indeed, Byron acknowledged that *Tristram Shandy* was among his models for *Don Juan*.[22] Sterne supported his literary and social performances by arranging for his portrait to be reproduced as a frontispiece engraving, and Byron followed

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[19] Richard Salmon, for example, suggests that "By the 1890s, most literary interviews were conducted 'at home.'" Richard Salmon, 'Signs of Intimacy: The Literary Celebrity in the "Age of Interviewing"', *Victorian Literature and Culture,* 25, no. 1 (1997), 159-77 (p. 165).

[20] In the light of these earlier arrangements, John Cawelti appears mistaken, at least for British culture, to claim that "in the first two decades of the nineteenth century writers seem less concerned with literary celebrity. Apparently, no established set of mechanisms for generating and purveying the writer as a person-performer existed" (p. 165). Cawelti also claims that "the use by a number of major writers of their celebrity personas as an integral part of their art" is a "twentieth century development" (p. 171). John G. Cawelti, 'The Writer as a Celebrity: Some Aspects of American Literature as Popular Culture,' *Studies in American Fiction,* 5 (1977), 161-74. However, see also Cawelti's reference to Byron on pp. 166-67.

[21] Peter M. Briggs, 'Laurence Sterne and Literary Celebrity in 1760,' *The Age of Johnson: A Scholarly Annual,* 4 (1991), 251-80, Ian Campbell Ross, *Laurence Sterne: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[22] See BLJ X, 150.

this example in distributing an authorial image along with his works.[23] So Sterne used some recognisable celebrity strategies of self-presentation. The "individual" corner of the triangle is intact. But the other corners, in the 1760s, were not. Without the later industrial developments in print technology, the growth of the periodical market to which they gave rise, the improvements in the postal service which enabled wider distribution of printed matter to the increasing number of literate people among a rapidly-enlarging population, and the shift from subscription publication to unmediated commercial publication, Sterne could not reach an audience the size of Byron's, nor reach his audience with such speed. When Walter Scott reflected on the impact of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, it was this sense of the audience's size and social diversity, and the speed with which new works could reach it, that seemed to him to mark his generation off from that of Sterne:

> Reading is indeed so general among all ranks and classes, that the impulse received by the public mind on such occasions is instantaneous through all but the lowest classes of society, instead of being slowly communicated from one set of readers to another, as was the case in the days of our fathers.
>
> (RR V, 2030)

The literary marketplace of the 1760s had not experienced the exponential growth in the annual output of printed items that began in the 1780s, nor was it yet enmeshed in the cycles of boom and bust that characterise industrial capitalism. Although the self-presentation of individuals such as Sterne includes celebrity characteristics, without the growth of a modern industry to produce and distribute his works, and a modern audience – massive, anonymous and socially diverse – to read them, it is misleading to describe the mid-eighteenth century as having a celebrity culture in the modern sense.

The mid-eighteenth century also lacked a modern vocabulary for talking about celebrity. The words emerged with the phenomenon they described, in the Romantic period. The original meanings of the word

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[23] See Briggs, p. 257.

"celebrity", concerning pomp, solemnity and the conduct of ceremonies, were obsolete by that time, although OED records that the use of "a celebrity" to mean a rite or celebration lingered until 1774. In 1751 Johnson recalled in *The Rambler* a period when he "did not find [him]self yet enriched in proportion to [his] celebrity". He used the word to name a desirable personal attribute for the professional man. Johnson acquired celebrity before he accrued any money. A century later, in 1849, a Miss Mulock asked her correspondent, "Did you see any of those 'celebrities,' as you call them?" Using a form of the word that was evidently still new to her, Mulock employed it as a concrete noun. She was eager for reports of people who were recognisable at sight as celebrities. The Romantic period witnessed the transition between Johnson's usage and Mulock's, when the noun concretised, becoming an individual's definitive condition. Celebrity was no longer something you had, but something you were. During this transitional period celebrity was also coming to be understood as a distinctly inferior variety of fame. Hester Thrale, writing to Johnson in 1784, used the word to indicate the modesty of her ambitions and her gendered sense of propriety. "Perhaps by my fame (and I hope it is so)" she wrote, "you mean only that celebrity which is a consideration of a much lower kind. I care for that only as it may give pleasure to my husband and his friends."[24] Although he did not use the word, Hazlitt made a comparable distinction between "fame" and "popularity" in his lecture 'On the Living Poets'. In the year of Byron's death another important word in the modern celebrity lexicon appeared. "Star" is first cited by OED as meaning "a person of brilliant reputation or talents" in 1824. By the end of the Romantic period, one could meaningfully speak of a celebrity or a star as a special kind of person with a distinct kind of public profile. The lexical shifts acknowledge, define and help to shape the emergence of a specifically modern way to enter the public sphere. A new kind of public life had appeared.

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[24] Hester Thrale to Samuel Johnson, 4 July 1784, in *Letters of Samuel Johnson* LL.D., ed. by George Birbeck Hill, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), II, 406.

If the celebrity apparatus's appearance answered an urgent need, then it was a need created by the industrialised print culture of the Romantic period. Industrialisation drove the explosive, unprecedented growth in the annual output of printed items from the 1780s, which is visible on James Raven's graph (fig. 1).[25] "The impressive growth-rates of the second half of the century are clear," writes Raven. "What is also clear is the watershed of the early 1780s."[26] In this part of the graph, as Lee Erickson observes, "the take-off pattern of an exponential growth curve is evident."[27] By the turn of the century there were not only more readers in Britain than ever before, but also a great deal more for them to read.

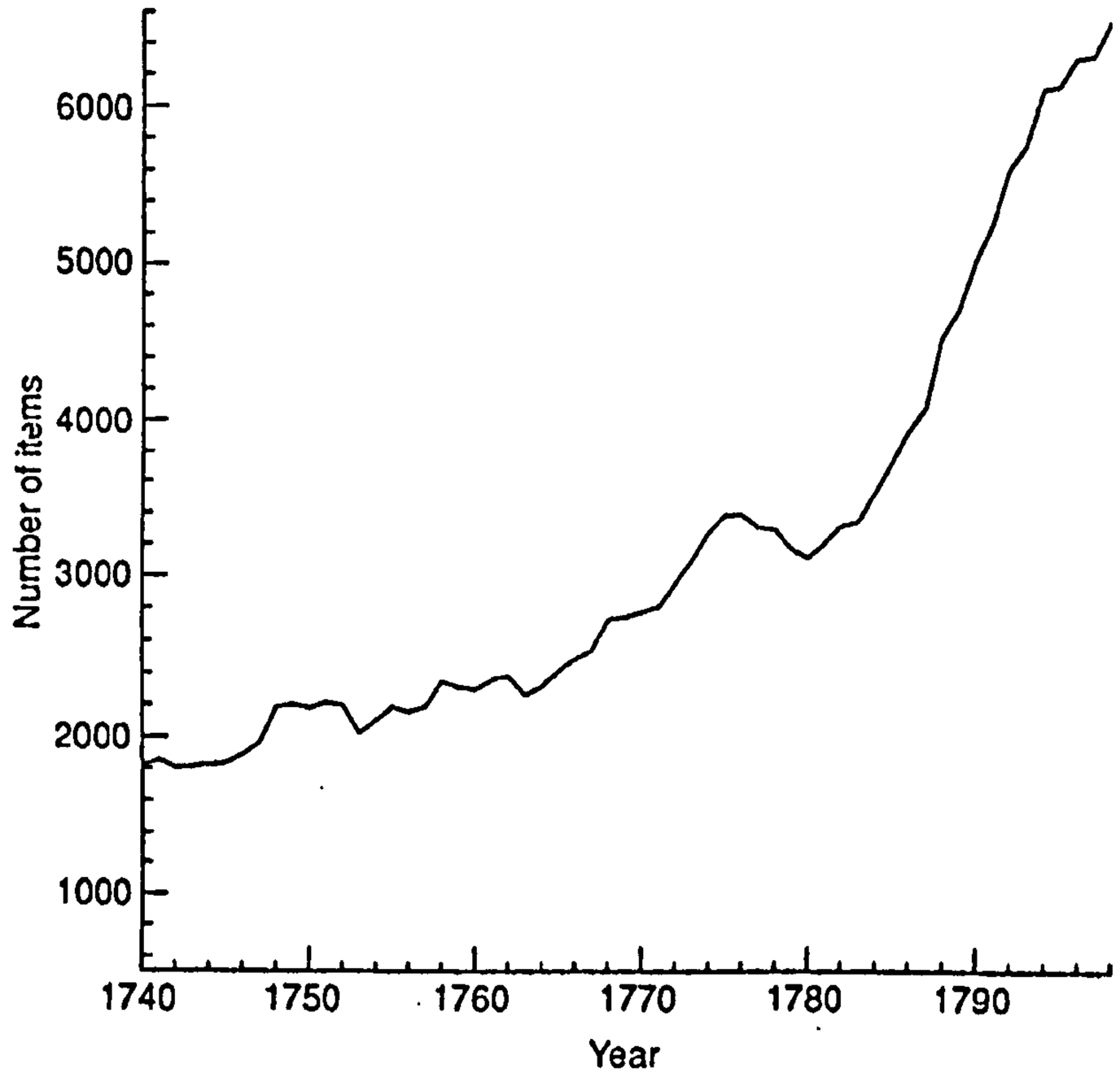

Fig. 1.

[25] The graph is based on a five year moving average of publication totals from the Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue. Raven uses totals provided by Michael Crump, and notes that they include "locally printed ephemera, handbills and ballads, as well as multiple editions. Other items recorded include hymnals, atlases, song-books, slip-songs and ballads, appeal cases, advertisements, sale catalogues, petitions, parliamentary cases, miscellaneous printed lists (including society membership, customs duties, and various rates), rule-sheets, type-specimens, handbills, proclamations and 'oddities which defy classification'." James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 32.

[26] Ibid. p. 35.

[27] Erickson notes that "Having risen gradually from roughly 1,800 printed items of all kinds in 1740 to around 3,000 items in 1780, English publications suddenly double to 6,000 by 1792." Lee Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialisation of Publishing, 1800-1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 7 and note.

The explosion of printed matter threatened both to reach a disturbingly radical popular audience and to swamp those readers who by remaining *au courant* might have checked and guided the tide of popular opinion. The overwhelmingly large and exponentially growing body of text called for strategies of selective reading. By 1795, the flood of new material had already overwhelmed Isaac D'Israeli:

> When I reflect that every literary journal consists of 50 or 60 publications, and that of those, 5 or 6 at least are capital performances, and the greater part not contemptible, when I take the pen and attempt to calculate, by these given sums, the number of volumes which the next century must infallibly produce, my feeble faculties wander in a perplexed series, and as I lose myself among billions, trillions, and quartillions, I am obliged to lay down my pen, and stop at infinity.[28]

After the turn of the century the *Edinburgh Review* (founded in 1803), and its rival the *Quarterly* (1809), abandoned the ambition of earlier journals such as the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1731) to notice every new publication. Their radically selective and evaluative approach helped to mediate between this glut of text and its audience.[29] But it was not simply a surge in the amount of printed matter that assaulted Romantic readers; it was also a deluge of proper names.

It is now possible to calculate the percentage of poetry and novels in the Romantic period that appeared anonymously.[30] The results shed a new light on the received idea that this is an age of personality. Not only were there more printed items to read but, for these two literary forms, an

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[28] Isaac D'Israeli, Preface to *An Essay on the Manners and Genius of the Literary Character* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1795), xvii-xix. Cited in Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 40.
[29] See Marilyn Butler, 'Culture's Medium: The Role of the Review' in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. by Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 120-47 and Derek Roper, *Reviewing Before the Edinburgh: 1788-1802* (London: Methuen, 1978).
[30] My calculations for poetry volumes are based on Lee Erickson's data in his article '"Unboastful Bard": Originally Anonymous English Romantic Poetry Book Publication, 1770-1835,' *New Literary History*, 33 (2002), 247-278 and the poetry line on my graph replicates a line on his graph on p. 252. For the novel, I have drawn on *The English Novel 1770-1829, a Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, ed. by James Raven, Peter Garside, and Rainer Schöwerling, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), using data from tables on I, 46-47 and II, 73.

increasing proportion of them emerged with a proper name attached. More books, more names. Both novels and poetry volumes show a marked and rapid drop in percentage anonymity until 1808 (fig. 2). After that year the downward trend continues steadily for poetry volumes, while the percentage of novels published anonymously increases once again.[31] Since my subject is a celebrity poet, it is the trend away from anonymity in poetry that most concerns me here. In 1770, over sixty percent of poetry volumes were published anonymously. In the years that followed it became increasingly common for authors to fix their names to their books, and when Byron was born in 1788 only thirty-six percent of poetry books were anonymous.

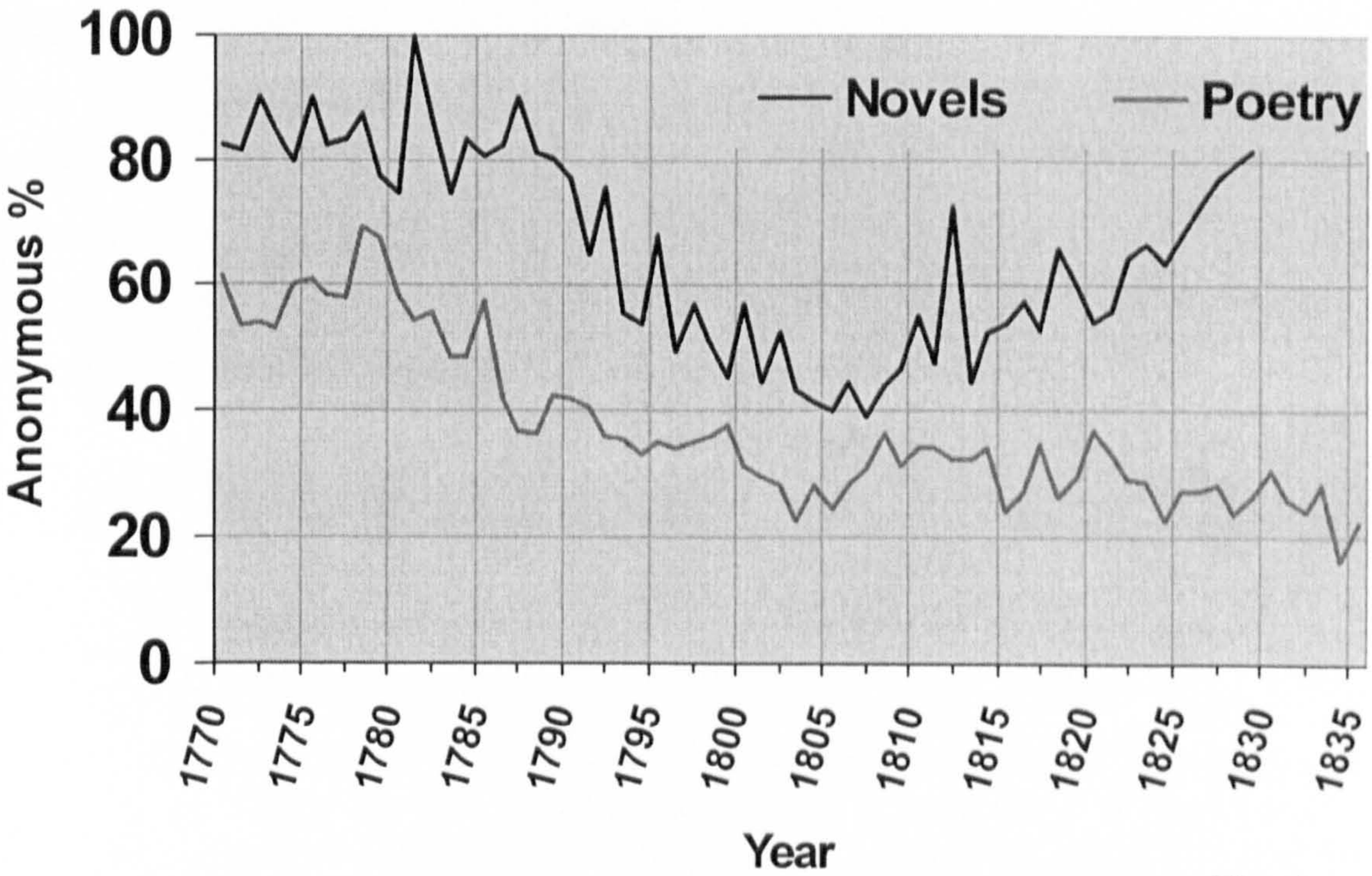

Fig. 2.

When he died in 1824 the figure was only 22.7 percent and it went on to reach a low point of 16.7 percent in 1834; only 22 volumes out of 132

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[31] The reasons for this increase in the percentage anonymity of novels are beyond the scope of this thesis, but may include a rise in female authorship of novels, if women were more likely to preserve a decorous anonymity; what Peter Garside calls a male "cult of anonymity in the 1820s", influenced by the anonymous successes of Walter Scott; and, since some publishers appear to have encouraged anonymity while others discouraged it, a shift in market share between publishers with different policies. See Peter Garside 'The English Novel in the Romantic Era: Consolidation and Dispersal' in Raven, Garside and Schöwerling, II, 15-103 especially pp. 66-67.

published.[32] The strength of the general trend away from anonymous poetry in the period is striking. The less anonymous writing there was, the more names had to compete for attention in the increasingly overcrowded public sphere. Print culture thronged with named individuals promoting their products and policies, their ideas and ideals – themselves. Proper names circulated along newly formed distribution networks, jostling for public notice. The numbers point to a Romantic surfeit of public personality.

This surfeit required people to develop new strategies for discriminating between the claims on their attention made by different individuals. When the surge in public profiles combined with the historic power shifts that were underway, established ways of working out who mattered enough to be noticed would no longer hold. Paralleling the shift from comprehensiveness to selectivity in the reviews, biographical encyclopaedias in the period show the difficulty of assimilating all the information circulating about personalities. Granger's *Biographical History of England* marks the failure of attempts to be comprehensive. Its first edition in 1769 was in three volumes and bore the longwinded title:

> A BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND, FROM EGBERT the GREAT to the REVOLUTION: CONSISTING OF CHARACTERS disposed in different CLASSES, and adapted to a METHODICAL CATALOGUE of Engraved BRITISH HEADS: INTENDED AS An ESSAY towards reducing our BIOGRAPHY to SYSTEM, and a Help to the Knowledge of PORTRAITS: INTERSPERSED WITH Variety of ANECDOTES, and MEMOIRS of a great Number of PERSONS, not to be found in any other Biographical Work: With a PREFACE, shewing the Utility of a Collection of ENGRAVED PORTRAITS to supply the Defect, and answer the various Purposes of MEDALS.

Granger produced a second edition in 1775, a third edition "with large additions and improvements" in 1779 and a fourth edition in 1804, each in four volumes. By the fifth edition in 1824, the original three volumes had been expanded to six "with upwards of a hundred additional lives". Granger

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[32] See Erickson, 'Unboastful Bard' Table 1 pp. 269-70. Erickson's figures are drawn from J. R. de J. Jackson, *Annals of English verse, 1770-1835: A Preliminary Survey of the Volumes Published* (New York: Garland, 1985) and supplemented by additional titles from J. R. de J. Jackson, *Romantic Poetry by Women: A Bibliography, 1770-1835* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

set out to produce a catalogue of portrait engravings, but "afterwards extended his plan" and added biographical sketches for each entry.[33] His effort "towards reducing our BIOGRAPHY to SYSTEM" required a comprehensive classification scheme. He arranged the catalogue historically by the reigns of English monarchs and hierarchically within each reign into twelve classes. The royal family came at the top, followed by "Great Officers of State", peers, churchmen and so on. "Ladies, and others, of the Female Sex" were grouped in the eleventh category, and at the bottom came "Persons of both Sexes, chiefly of the lowest Order of the People, remarkable from only one Circumstance in their Lives; namely [...] deformed Persons, Convicts, &c."[34] Bibliomaniacs collected the engraved portraits that Granger catalogued, and bound them into his book, in a practice that became known as Grangerizing. In the process, a single copy of Granger's book might be expanded into a multi-volume set containing thousands of illustrations.[35] Such unwieldy and hubristic attempts at comprehensiveness were bound to fail once the Romantic personality overload set in. No matter how fast Granger's *History* expanded with each edition, it couldn't hope to keep pace with the increasing number of names that seemed to demand inclusion in its pages.

Instead of comprehensiveness, selectivity was required. While the *Edinburgh Review* took the flood of printed matter in hand, deigning to notice only a tiny fraction, another kind of biographical collection aimed to sift through the surfeit of public personality. Nobility provided the obvious tool for selection, and seventy-five different guides to the peerage were published between 1770 and 1830, including the first edition of Debrett's in 1802 and Burke's in 1826.[36] But in a changing political climate, rank was no longer such an effective rule of thumb. The *Ancien Régime* had been overthrown in France and at home landed wealth was starting to give way to

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[33] James Granger, *A Biographical History of England etc.* 3rd ed., 4 vols (London: J. Rivington etc., 1779) unnumbered "Plan". Granger is writing about himself in the third person.
[34] Ibid.
[35] See Robert A. Shaddy, 'Grangerizing: "One of the Unfortunate Stages of Bibliomania"', *Book Collector,* 49, no. 4 (2000), 535-46.
[36] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Vintage, 1996), p. 173.

speculative, circulating capital. When fortunes could be made and lost and the material signs of status exchanged, including land ownership, individuals could rise to public prominence and fall into obscurity with unprecedented speed. Claims to public notice could no longer rest solely on heraldic devices, inherited titles or inalienable estates passed down for many generations. These historic shifts both displaced the authority of the old codes and made it all the more urgent to find new ones for winnowing claims on the public's attention. Lord Byron, as both an aristocrat and a celebrity, eased the transition to a new form of personal distinction. In the shadow of the French Revolution, it also seemed vital to assert British individuality over French collectivity. Jerome Christensen suggests that the Revolution was characterised in Britain as the "collective subordination of manifold, contingent life courses to the idea of an inevitable historical event". The British reacted by looking for a new man whose individual strength of character would oppose the Revolutionary "supersession of biography by typology" and reassure them that revolution was an exclusively continental trauma.[37] But real heroes were hard to come by. A personality vacuum occupied the political power centre after the deaths of Pitt and Fox in 1806. The increasingly shaky and ironically named Ministry of All the Talents (1806-07) failed to fill the gap.[38] And the Regency crisis of 1811 only made things worse. When Byron wrote "I want a hero: an uncommon want, / When every year and month sends forth a new one" he acknowledged the surfeit of individuals promoting their heroic properties and objected that there was not a real hero to be seen. The British seemed to be deluged with personalities, yet lacking a way to work out who really mattered.

What was true for public life in general was true for literature in particular. "This truth at least let Satire's self allow," Byron wrote, "No dearth

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[37] Jerome Christensen, *Romanticism at the End of History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 78.
[38] Iain McCalman notes that the coalition earned the title "All the Talents" because of its political diversity, but that it "quickly became ironic, especially after an influential satire by that name had been produced by [...] Eaton Stannard Barrett[.]" *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776-1832*, ed. by Iain McCalman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 606.

of Bards can be complained of now".[39] And Thomas Moore raised a laugh by pretending that the opposite was true, in an 'Announcement of a New Grand Acceleration Company for the Promotion of the Speed of Literature'.[40] The company would feed the newly-enlarged reading public's demand for books, "Loud complaints being made, in these quick-reading times, / Of too slack a supply, both of prose works and rhymes" (1-2). It had established a literature factory where "We keep authors ready, all perch'd, pen in hand, / To write off, in any giv'n style, at command" (40-41). The company thus aimed to profit from the importance of proper names in the literary market. "[O]n th' establishment" were to be found:

> six Walter Scotts,
> One capital Wordsworth, and Southeys in lots; –
> Three choice Mrs. Nortons, all singing like syrens,
> While most of our pallid young clerks are Lord Byrons.
> Then we've ***s and ***s (for whom there's small call),
> And ***s and ***s (for whom no call at all).
>
> (44-49)

There was no call for authors with no names. Meanwhile named authors flooded the market with writing that seemed to be churned out of the factories that were appearing across the English countryside.

The rise of industrially produced books interposed an impersonal mediating layer between writers and readers. With "general commercial publishing of the modern kind", in Raymond Williams's classic characterisation, came "the institution of 'the market' as the type of a writer's actual relations with society."[41] As more published writers became known to their readers by name, writers could know the names of a smaller fraction of their readership. The audience became anonymous and unknowable, creating a new alienation between writer and reader. Many authors despaired of finding a sympathetic audience, and denigrated the

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[39] *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,* 123-24. CPW I, 233.
[40] Thomas Moore, *The Poetical Works,* 10 vols (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, & Longmans, 1840-41), IX, 240-43.
[41] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1993), p. 32.

marketplace and the reading multitude as a result.[42] Readers likewise felt estranged from authors: how were they to find among the mass of new reading material an author who shared their assumptions and concerns? Thomas De Quincey recalled his childhood experience of this estrangement in *Suspiria de Profundis*. Having contracted a debt with a local bookseller, De Quincey recalled how he seemed to have stumbled into a "vast systematic machinery" for the industrial production of innumerable books and their distribution into every corner of England.[43] He imagined an endless "procession of carts and waggons" emanating from the mysterious and impersonal metropolis to jettison piles of books at his door.[44] "De Quincey's fantasy" writes Lucy Newlyn, "figures the reader as the helpless consumer of books and as the humiliated victim of a powerful machinery of literary production designed precisely to remind him of his anonymous unimportance."[45] The apparatus of celebrity was among the structures that Romantic culture developed to mitigate this sense of information overload and alienation. It responded to the surfeit of public personality by branding an individual's identity in order to make it amenable to commercial promotion. It palliated the feeling of alienation between cultural producers and consumers by constructing a sense of intimacy.

In order to boost the celebrity individual's visibility over that of other aspirants, the celebrity apparatus turned his or her proper name into a brand name.[46] When the *European Magazine* received a "new volume of poetry, bearing the noble name of Byron as it's [sic] passport to celebrity" it knew that the noble name acted as a guarantor of certain marketable qualities and connotations (RR II, 981). Byron's name commanded notice, even when his

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[42] Erickson concludes, "The estrangement that writers felt from the reception of their writing had its foundation in the economic changes in the publishing industry created by technological improvements in printing". *The Economy of Literary Form*, p. 189.
[43] Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater and Other Writings*, ed. by Grevel Lindop (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 134.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Newlyn, p. 47. See her extended discussion of this passage, pp. 45-48.
[46] On the fascinating function of proper names in Enlightenment and Romantic literary culture, see, for example, Jerome Christensen, *Practicing Enlightenment: Hume and the Formation of a Literary Career* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987) and Peter T. Murphy, 'Impersonation and Authorship in Romantic Britain,' *ELH*, 59 (1992), 625-49.

writing did not. The volume in question included *Sardanapalus*, which had "so very few claims upon our attention, that were it not the work of the author of '*Childe Harold*,' it might be very readily permitted to pass unnoticed" (RR II, 981). The branding process worked through several mechanisms. It cultivated visual trademarks, making Byron recognisable from a few repeated features: a curl of hair, a high forehead, an open collar. These were depicted in portraits which circulated via the new technology of steel plate engraving, creating almost endlessly reproducible prints whose features were then picked up in illustrations and cartoons. While his appearance became recognised for a few distinctive features, his poetry played with several formulae, which were repeated with variations. The Byronic hero fed Byron's celebrity by being immediately recognisable as a version of the man himself, functioning as a further tool for increasing his personal visibility in Romantic culture. By shaping his poems into an integrated oeuvre, repeated formulae like the Byronic hero enhanced their cumulative effect of increasing Byron's celebrity. In the same way, Byron's use of series to which he could return at crucial moments provided touchstones of public prominence, ways in which he could remind his readers of his characteristic qualities. *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan* kept readers coming back to purchase the next instalment and kept Byron in the public eye so long as he continued to write them. The result, as John Scott noted in 1821, was that Byron "awakened, by literary exertion, a more intense interest in his person than ever before resulted from literature."[47] Although the process of branding identity began by fixing on existing features of Byron's style, it quickly became implicated in shaping that style, making Byron's celebrity not simply an adjunct to his writing but a component of it. These mechanisms for branding identity were wonderfully effective, but they also left Byron committed to a logic of celebrity which could be constraining. Having risen to public prominence, Byron felt the burden of public expectation. Too often, it seemed, he had to produce what a correspondent of the *Brighton Magazine* called "the paltry impostures and *tours de finesse* to which a popular writer is obliged to resort in order to

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[47] John Scott, 'Living Authors, No. IV: Lord Byron,' *London Magazine*, 3 (1821), 50-61.

preserve what, in modern cant, is called the ear of the public."[48] A century later, Rudolph Valentino expressed the same problem succinctly. "A man should control his life," he said. "Mine is controlling me. I don't like it."[49]

The branded identity's commercial success was ensured because it was easily recognisable in the crowded marketplace, continually developing to offer new satisfactions but remaining reassuringly familiar. It rose to public prominence because it circulated effectively, and this circulation was guaranteed by the ease with which it could be appropriated. "A star" writes Andrew Wernick, "is anyone whose name and fame have been built up to the point where reference to them [...] can serve as a promotional booster in itself."[50] While the noble name acts as a passport to celebrity for each new volume on its first appearance, Murray appropriates Byron's branded identity to sell other products. These include collected editions, which contrive to sell the same poems in other formats, illustrations which trade on Byron's visual familiarity and opportunities for synergy, such as the publication of Moore's *Jacqueline* in the same volume as *Lara*. Byron's celebrity could also be appropriated to sell other products, for example magazines, over which Byron and even Murray had little control. On one hand a commercial asset constructed with the help of a single publisher, the celebrity's branded identity garners cultural prominence and commercial success because it is also impossible to maintain a monopoly over its exploitation. In the undeveloped copyright conditions of the Romantic period, Byron's celebrity takes on a life of its own in the marketplace, where it is appropriated and redeployed both by other businesses and by consumers.

The growth of celebrity culture also eased the sense of industrial alienation between readers and writers. The celebrity apparatus relied on the concealed use of new cultural technologies to construct an impression of intimacy. The trick was not to let the poems seem like industrial productions

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[48] 'C', 'Lord Byron,' *The Brighton Magazine*, 7 (1822), 45-52 (p. 49).
[49] Cited in *Celebrity: The Media as Image Makers*, ed. by James Monaco (New York: Delta Books, 1978), xi.
[50] Andrew Wernick, *Promotional Culture: Advertising, Ideology and Symbolic Expression* (London: Sage, 1991), p. 106.

competing for attention in a crowded market made up of increasingly estranged readers and writers. Instead, the poems fostered what I call a hermeneutic of intimacy. It worked by suggesting that Byron's poems could only be understood fully by referring to their author's personality, that reading them was entering a kind of relationship with the author, and that that relationship resembled an intimate connection between individuals. As a result, in Peter Manning's words, the poems "furnished the simulacrum of intimacy the new readership craved."[51] John Wilson, reviewing *Childe Harold* Canto Four in the *Edinburgh Review*, described the effect:

> Each of us must have been aware in himself of a singular illusion by which these disclosures, when read with that tender or high interest which attaches to poetry, seem to have something of the nature of private and confidential communications. They are not felt, while we read, as declarations published to the world, – but almost as secrets whispered to chosen ears. Who is there that feels, for a moment, that the voice which reaches the inmost recesses of his heart is speaking to the careless multitudes around him? Or, if we do so remember, the words seem to pass by others like air, and to find their way to the hearts for whom they were intended, – kindred and sympathizing spirits, who discern and own that secret language, of which the privacy is not violated, though spoken in hearing of the uninitiated, – because it is not understood. There is an unobserved beauty that smiles on us alone; and the more beautiful to us, because we feel as if chosen out from a crowd of lovers.
>
> (RR II, 895)

Wilson figures Byron's poems not as broadcasts but as billets doux, coded messages for those readers sympathetic enough to receive them.[52] Bypassing the careless multitudes, the poems avoid the Romantic sense of alienation by appearing as communications between intimates. Those communications are "disclosures", referring back to a pre-textual Byron and revealing the details of his subjectivity. Twin engines drove the hermeneutic of intimacy. Firstly, the belief that Byron revealed himself in his poetry, though this revelation was never stable or complete. A large part of the poems' attraction for their first readers was the evidence they offered of an

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[51] Peter J. Manning, '*Don Juan* and the Revisionary Self,' in *Romantic Revisions*, ed. Robert Brinkley and Keith Hanley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 210-26 (p. 216).

[52] On Byronic encoding see Gary Dyer, 'Thieves, Boxers, Sodomites, Poets: Being Flash to Byron's *Don Juan*,' *PMLA*, 116, no. 3 (2001), 562-78.

ur-Byron, a non-textual or pre-textual George Gordon with hidden subjective depths. Secondly, the impression that not only were his poems the effusions of a particularly fascinating individual, but that they could also offer a kind of access to him.[53]

For many of Byron's first readers buying, reading, reading aloud, lending, borrowing, copying into commonplace books, annotating and discussing Byron's poetry were the central activities among a group of practices aimed at investigating Byron the man, in order to know more about him or relate more intimately to him. The poems fostered this impression, as I will show, by figuring reading as a form of relationship, a "para-social interaction" that enabled an intimate bond.[54] When they also suggested that bodies could be read like texts and that texts could metonymically substitute for bodies, they charged that encounter with erotic undertones. Reading Byron's poems was supplemented by such activities as buying and looking at portraits of Byron, or illustrations in which the Byronic hero was represented as the poet, soliciting introductions to Byron, writing to him, dressing in Byronic fashion, reading newspapers, cartoons or reviews, and falling in love, either with the noble lord, or violently, passionately and hopelessly, as his characters were wont to do. The hermeneutic of intimacy, then, is an intertextual paradigm for reading Byron's poetry, seeded by the poetry itself and the ways in which it was published, propagated by a wider print culture and variously enacted by individual readers, which, although it may not be consciously articulated or adopted, is difficult to avoid.

The hermeneutic of intimacy succeeded commercially because it marketed as a commodity an escape from the standardised impersonality of commodity culture. It therefore had attractions for both entrepreneurs and

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[53] The impression that Byron's poems "provided an almost unmediated knowledge of his mind" (p. 13) is very well analysed by Andrew Elfenbein's chapter 'Byron and the Secret Self' in his *Byron and the Victorians*, pp. 13-46.

[54] Studying television and radio, Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl note how "the technical devices of the media themselves are exploited to create illusions of intimacy" and call the nexus of audience and media personality a "para-social interaction". D. Horton and R. R. Wohl, 'Mass Communication and Para-social Interaction,' *Psychiatry*, 19 (1956), 215-29.

consumers, and answered the problem of individuation through consumption. If our patterns of consumption define us as individuals, how will we remain convinced of our own uniqueness while consuming mass-produced standardised products? The hermeneutic of intimacy allows readers to imagine that those endlessly copied poems are for them alone, not for the careless multitude. This kind of reading then becomes the basis for claiming cultural distinction. Laying claim to the virtues of sympathy and perspicuity enables discriminating readers to distinguish their understanding of Byron from that of those around them, making them "feel as if chosen out from a crowd of lovers". While the rest read merely adequately, they have "chosen ears". Sympathy touches "the inmost recesses" of their hearts. They are the "kindred and sympathising spirits" who hear meaning in words that "pass by others like air." Numbered among the "initiated", they feel as though the poems' "secrets" are intended for them.

These techniques of branding and reading relied on assumptions about subjectivity which the celebrity apparatus played an important part in sponsoring. Branding an identity that would be amenable to commercial promotion required subjectivity to be understood as self-identical over time, but continually developing toward greater self-expression or self-fulfilment. This enabled the brand to remain both immediately recognisable in the crowded market and yet always newly interesting. The hermeneutic of intimacy required subjectivity to be understood as structured around a private interior. That interior was hidden from the view of the undiscerning, but was also continually making itself legible, expressing itself in poems where its secrets could be read by the discerning few. Critics have suggested that these ideas were among those to coalesce into a recognisably modern model of the subject in the Romantic period. What has not been understood is the role of the celebrity apparatus in normalising that model, influencing the ways in which the consumers of celebrity texts thought not only about the celebrity's selfhood, but also about their own. The celebrity apparatus, I contend, championed this model of subjectivity not because it was inherently true to life, but because it fitted the commercial

need for a kind of identity that could be reliably branded and consistently marketed.

In the following chapters, I study the nature of Byron's celebrity in detail and consider its effects on his poetry. Initially the hermeneutic of intimacy was produced largely by accident. Byron did not set out to employ the techniques I have described when he began *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812). Having caught the public imagination, however, he and Murray were quick to capitalise and in 'To Ianthe' he first figured reading as a relationship. *The Giaour* (1813) begins the series of Turkish Tales that follows Byron's initial success. Its fragmentary form and publication in multiple editions helped to create the personal fascination with Byron as an individual which underlies his celebrity. At the same time, a number of extra-textual elements fed this fascination. Rumours about Byron's travels, his appearances in London society and his commissioned portraits all stoked his celebrity. This complex of representations shaped the branded identity that would resonate in Byron's own poems and abound in the culture at large. Its proliferation marked the success of Byron and Murray's collaborative promotion strategy, but it also entailed a loss of autonomy, which challenged Byron's Romantic belief that he was solely responsible for the figure he cut in the world.

As his image circulated in textual and visual media, it underwent a series of metamorphoses at the hands of others. I study the example of the engraver Thomas Blood. The public gaze that Byron had courted then started to seem burdensome, and I trace his retreat from London society and his attempt to restrict his writing to a private journal in 1813-14. In this period, Byron strove to preserve a private sense of self apart from his branded identity, implicitly asserting that his poems proceeded from a hidden interior to which his readers and the technicians of his public profile did not have access and which they could not control. The autonomy of his personal motivations reasserted itself in his determination to write in unexpected ways. With *Hebrew Melodies* (1815) he attempted to move his writing in a new direction. But, as I show, his capacity to move outside the branded identity he had helped to create was severely limited by the literary

marketplace in which he was now involved. I then produce a textual reading of the legal issues surrounding Byron's separation from his wife, in order to suggest that this period alerted him to the dangers of malicious misreading. The hermeneutic of intimacy no longer seemed a desirable way in which to figure the relationship between reader and writer. The more intimate you are, the more it hurts to be misunderstood. Writing against the logic of his celebrity, Byron tried to displace the hermeneutic of intimacy by rethinking the reader/writer nexus in *Childe Harold* Canto Three (1816). He did not, however, produce a workable alternative. In *Don Juan* (1819-24) he pushed his resistance further, critiquing the assumptions about subjectivity on which his celebrity rested and which it helped to normalise.

In recounting this story, the thesis moves between the three corners on the interpretative triangle of individual, industry and audience, producing some unconventional foci. I begin with 'An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill,' (1812) rather than the usual point of departure, *Hours of Idleness* (1807). This foregrounds the context of industrialisation, the technological developments that underpin Romantic print culture, and the ethical implications of those developments. It acts as a necessary prolegomenon to a consideration of Byron's place in industrial culture. Later, I devote a chapter to *Hebrew Melodies* – a collection which has been neglected precisely because it does not fit the branded identity that we have come to accept as Byronic. I study the publishing history of *Hebrew Melodies*, and reveal strategies of assimilation and marginalisation that literary critics have unknowingly perpetuated. I also unpack the "Years of Fame"; a critical commonplace since Peter Quennell's 1935 book of that name. They have for too long been considered as a homogenous phase of Byron's career. By devoting five chapters to poems published between 1812 and 1816, I show the shifting forces that were at work in this period, and which are disguised by accounts which present these years as the sunny uplands of Byron's celebrity. These adventures beyond stable categories and staple texts are grounded in an approach that draws on a number of recent developments in literary criticism and theory. I attempt not simply to reconstruct lost contexts from the past, but to connect the past and the present, not through the study

of literary influence, but by investigating the beginning of a modern cultural phenomenon which cannot be understood without reference to its history.[55] I make use of methods from the increasingly vital discipline of book history, with its conviction that textual materiality is constitutive of meaning and its insistence that publications take up positions in a literary marketplace.[56] I employ a strain of reader-response criticism that avoids sinking into subjectivism by recovering the hermeneutic paradigms that were available to readers in the past, rather than the individual responses those paradigms structured. Readers receive cues from within the text they read, but also from its material production, means of distribution and mediation in reviews and other related texts. Since the intertextual elaboration of Byron's celebrity encompasses both verbal and visual texts, this thesis also follows a growing trend among literary critics to attend more fully to visual culture.[57]

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[55] Recent attempts to draw connections between Romantic and modern phenomena vary from Orrin N. C. Wang, *Fantastic Modernity: Dialectical Readings in Romanticism and Theory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), to *Romanticism and Postmodernism,* ed. by Edward Larrissy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Jerome Christensen asserts that "the fundamental issue" at stake in such criticism "is whether Romantic poetry is dead to the world, immured in its time, or is yet potently, richly available for use." Christensen, *Romanticism at the End of History*, pp. 60-61. Jerome McGann has likewise insisted, in different terms, on the importance of relating past, present and future. He writes, "the pasts reconstituted by present literary studies are established for *critical* purposes: to expose to itself the mind of the present in order that it may be better able to execute its human interests and projects for the future." Jerome McGann, *Byron and Romanticism*, ed. by James Soderholm (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 220.

[56] The importance of textual materiality in constructing textual meanings was recognised in the pioneering studies of W. W. Greg (see Sir Walter Wilson Greg, *Collected Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966)) and radically developed by D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts: The Panizzi Lectures, 1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Studies of the Romantic literary marketplace include Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form*, William G. Rowland, *Literature and the Marketplace: Romantic Writers and their Audiences in Great Britain and the United States* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996) and *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices,* ed. by John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). The discipline of book history took an important step towards self-definition with the publication of *The Book History Reader,* ed. by David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (London: Routledge, 2002).

[57] W. J. T. Mitchell has promoted engagements between art historians and literary critics, which are, he claims, "the result of following out the imperatives of a problem central to a single discipline." W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Introduction' in *The Language of Images,* ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 1-2. Timothy Clayton has urged us to integrate the study of printed images into reinvigorated accounts of print culture, writing: "It is now time to restore prints to their proper historical context. One of the most important recent developments in historiography has been a new understanding of the significance of print culture and the manner in which it operates. The study of printed images must be integrated into this account." Timothy Clayton, *The English Print: 1688-1802* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 284.

Although the modern phenomenon of celebrity is two hundred years old, it has recently begun to concern literary critics with a new urgency. Some have expressed concern that "authorship has come to be seen in some quarters as a sort of high-paying embellishment of celebrity", with "celebrity" authors displacing "literary" authors from publishers' lists.[58] Others have worried that celebrity is infecting criticism, making the object of study into a celebrity and distorting analysis by imposing its own logic. Thus Peter Preston, reviewing a biography of Primo Levi, fears that:

> [Levi] hovers on the brink of becoming one of that most horrendous species – a celebrity – and thus the circumstances of his decline, the reasons for his suicide, must have their celebrity exploration.[59]

Still others have been troubled by the emergence of academic celebrity. Routledge advertises its best-selling literary critics at the MLA convention with huge portrait posters, shading professional prominence into celebrity promotion.[60] David Shumway argues that a "fundamental shift" linked to the emergence of critical theory has produced a star system in literary studies. He concludes that "the star system inhibits the production of collectively held knowledge and has weakened public confidence in the profession."[61] Sharon O'Dair suggests that this state of affairs is produced by the uneasy co-existence of two contradictory "model[s] of recruitment and compensation" in the academy.[62] Celebrity, which privileges charisma and

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[58] John F. Baker, 'The Rise of the Celebrity Author,' in *The Professions of Authorship: Essays in Honor of Matthew J. Bruccoli*, ed. by Richard Layman and Joel Myerson (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 41-43 (p. 41).
[59] Peter Preston, review of *Primo Levi* by Ian Thomson, *The Observer*, 7 April 2002, p. 13
[60] Laurie Langbauer, 'The Celebrity Economy of Cultural Studies,' *Victorian Studies*, 36, no. 4 (1993), 466-72 (p. 470).
[61] David R. Shumway, 'The Star System in Literary Studies,' *PMLA*, 112, no. 1 (1997), 85-100 (p. 86). These arguments must be seen in the context of changing academic employment conditions. Sharon O'Dair suggests a link to the "wasteful and immoral" overproduction of Ph.D.s in a winner-takes-all job market. Sharon O'Dair, 'Stars, Tenure and the Death of Ambition,' *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 36, no. 4 (1997), 607-27 (p. 609). Bruce Robbins rejects this, arguing that such complaints miss the real scandal of a two-tier academy divided not between celebrities and the average lecturer, but between tenured and casual workers. Bruce Robbins, 'Celeb-Reliance: Intellectuals, Celebrity, and Upward Mobility,' *Postmodern Culture: An Electronic Journal of Interdisciplinary Criticism*, 9, no. 2 (1999) http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/postmodern_culture/v009/9.2robbins.html, especially paragraphs 3, 4 and 21.
[62] O'Dair, p. 617.

visibility, has been superimposed, she argues, on an older model of quasi-monastic teaching. O'Dair envisages some possible advantages of embracing a celebrity system, but Shumway argues that "by locating authority in disciplinary stars, the star system has reduced the legitimacy of the discipline's discourse in the culture at large."[63] These concerns suggest that literary critics currently work within an unresolved debate, not to say a crisis, concerning the audience for academic discourse and the status of the professional critic.[64] Celebrity culture is making academic critics re-examine their matrices of legitimation and the truth claims inherent in their work.

If we are to understand the history of celebrity we need to admit our contemporary concern with celebrity, but conversely we will not understand why celebrity fascinates and bothers us so much until we understand its history. Writing that history and theorising its significance means turning back to Byron, whose celebrity seemed to Macaulay to be something new and strange. "It is certain," he wrote, "that the interest which he excited during his life is without a parallel in literary history."[65] I site that unparalleled interest at the historical emergence of a modern obsession not in order to immure it in its two-hundred-year-old strangeness, but to allow it to resonate with the present. If Byron's works absorb your interest, you may be experiencing a kind of fascination that refuses to be over and done with, that is not an episode in the history of literature, but an element in the historicity of the present.

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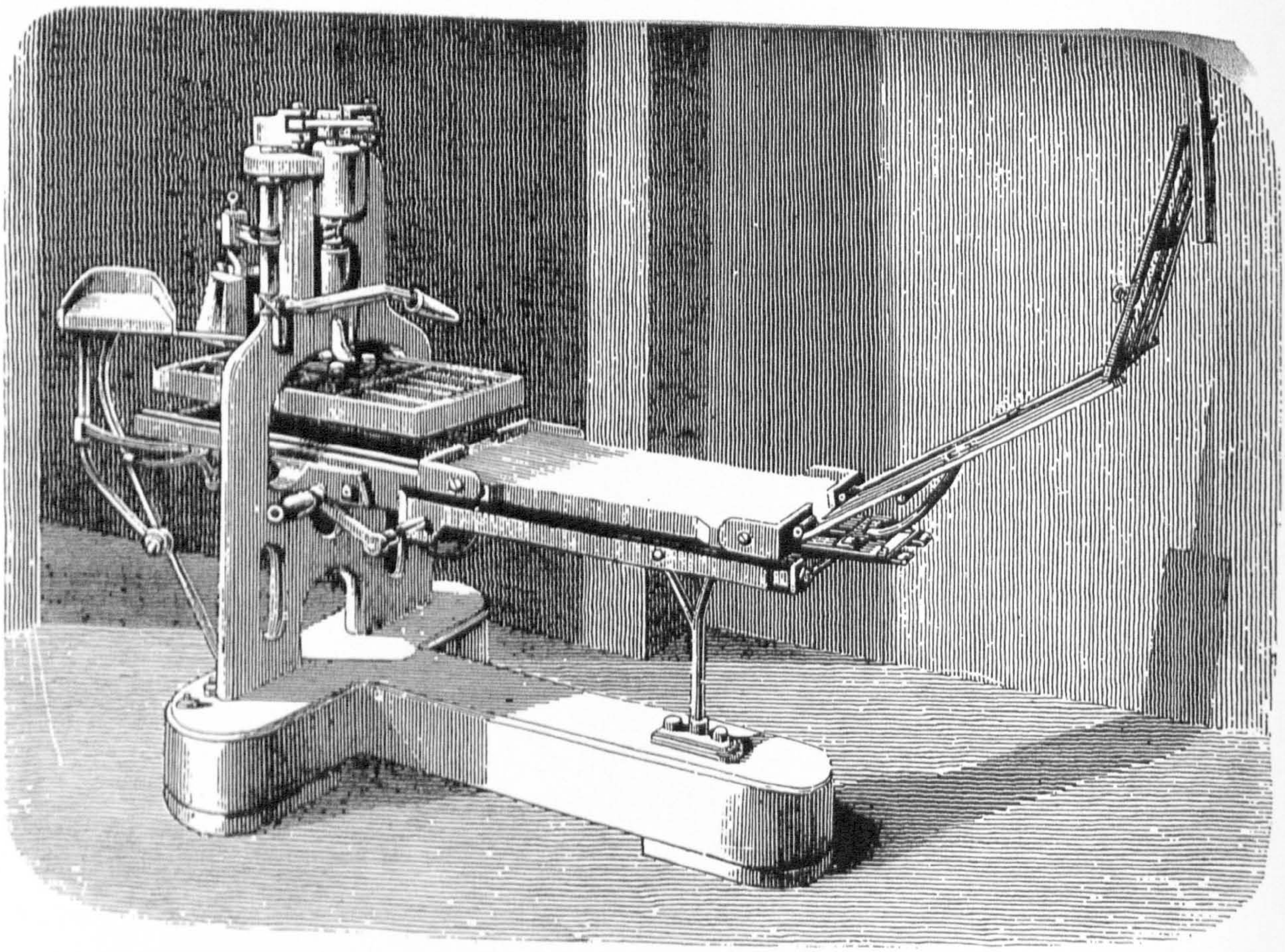
[63] Shumway, p. 98.
[64] Chris Rojek appears blind to these concerns when he presents himself as a sort of celebrity by writing a sentence like "In July 1999 Peter Hamilton persuaded me over lunch in *The Ivy* restaurant, London, to write this book" (p. 206) and refers to his Ph.D. students as future "academic celebrities of distinction" (pp. 206-07). A critic who studies the apparatus of celebrity should at least acknowledge these issues.
[65] Cited in Rutherford, p. 315.



'An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill': The Embarrassment of Industrial Culture

Most of Byron's critics skip over 'An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill', understandably eager to get to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, which was published only eight days later, when Byron awoke to find himself famous.[1] To linger on the 'Ode' is to hold Byron on the threshold of fame, to capture him in a freeze frame just before his career takes off. Doing so enables us to glimpse him before it's clear what direction his life will take, and gives us a chance to peer behind the scenes at some of the machinery that will drive Byromania, propelling its star to the pinnacle of Romantic celebrity. Byron wrote to his political mentor Lord Holland that he was "apprehensive that your Lordship will think me [...] *half* a *framebreaker myself*" (BLJ II, 166). In this chapter, I too am half a framebreaker. The frames that I aim to break are those chronological and conceptual frames that have led critics to ignore or dismiss the 'Ode'. Incomplete understandings of legal definitions and parliamentary procedures have led critics mistakenly to frame the poem chronologically, representing it as a peevish comment on a completed legislative process. This characterisation is part of a conceptual frame in which Byron's political engagement with Luddism can be dismissed as a failed effort in self-promotion, designed to launch his career in the House of Lords. These are the frames I would break.

But I am only half a framebreaker, and I will construct three new frames in which to view the poem. The first is the corrected chronology of the Frame Bill's passage through parliament, the process by which it was amended and made into law. The second is the industrialisation of textile manufacture, on which the poem comments. I will suggest that this prefigured developments in the overlapping, but slightly slower, industrialisation of printing, which is my third frame. Byron's poem benefits from industrial printing by being published in a large-circulation newspaper produced by rapidly advancing print technology. Having argued that

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[1] The phrase "I awoke one morning and found myself famous" was first attributed to Byron by Thomas Moore in his *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron with Notices of his Life*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1830), I, 347.

Romantic celebrity emerged in response to a surfeit of public personality that grew from developments in communications technologies, I now consider Byron's engagement with those developments, as a prerequisite to studying his celebrity. I take this short poem as an example of the work of art in industrial culture and a test case for critical methods that elaborate publication contexts and trace the contours of cultural agency. I site 'An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill' where my three frames – two trajectories of technological advance and one instance of oppressive legislation – intersect. On these frames I would weave an argument for understanding 'An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill' as one example of Byron's activist writing. That argument will be supported by my discovery of a previously unknown reprint of Byron's poem in a Nottingham newspaper. But the argument will also oblige me to address the issue of whether the ethical effectiveness of Byron's poem on the industrialisation of textile manufacture is compromised by its complicity in the industrialisation of printing. To do so, I will draw a distinction between two kinds of poetic agency, which has implications for the broader frame in which critics of Romanticism work. On one hand, the agency of a poet over the production and distribution of his poems, which Blake maintained in the highest degree. On the other, the agency of a text in the world, which Byron aspired to mobilise. The ode's example suggests that although Byron should perhaps have been embarrassed by industrialisation, he could also embarrass industrialisation by annotating its abuses.

Having returned from his travels, Byron fixed on the Frame Bill for his maiden speech in the House of Lords.[2] The Bill, introduced into the House

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[2] As a young peer, Byron had patrician ambitions to shine in the House of Lords. He prepared himself for a career there with Speech Day orations at school, and once delayed his return to Harrow to hear parliamentary speeches on Catholic emancipation (Leslie A. Marchand, *Byron: A Biography*, 3 vols (London: John Murray, 1957), I, 95-97). He was a member of the Whig club at Cambridge, and took his seat in the House of Lords when he reached his majority in 1809. Before going abroad he attended seven sessions of the House (Marchand, I, 313n). Robert Charles Dallas claimed that "I often spoke to him of the superior and substantial fame, the way to which lay before him through the House of Lords, expressing my hope of one day seeing him an active and eloquent statesman." Robert Charles Dallas, *Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron* (Norwood: Norwood Editions, 1977), pp. 189-90. On Byron's Speech Day oratory, see Paul Elledge, *Lord Byron at Harrow*

of Commons by Richard Ryder, the Home Secretary, on 14 February 1812, prescribed the death penalty to people breaking weaving frames. Breaking frames was already an offence punishable with transportation for 14 years, but the Government now called for a more exemplary punishment. This was a response to the civil disturbances in the Midlands, where weavers were vandalising weaving frames in protest against wage-cuts which had reduced them to a state of near-starvation. Ryder told the Commons that "the ground on which he proposed the bill, was this, that if the offence were permitted to be perpetrated as it had been, it would threaten serious danger to the state."[3] The Tory ministry was trying to prevent the rioting from turning into a full-scale insurrection and, as D. N. Raymond dryly asserts, "the easiest method of procedure was, in their opinion, so to terrorise the weavers that they would submit with more amenity to unemployment and starvation."[4] The Commons passed the Bill on 20 February. Lord Liverpool introduced the Bill to the House of Lords, where it received its first reading on Friday 21 February 1812; as was customary at a first reading, no debate took place that day.[5] The following Monday, 24 February, it was ordered that the Bill receive its second reading the following day, but in fact there was no time, and the last thing the Lords did before adjourning on Tuesday was to postpone the second reading until Thursday. On Thursday 27 February there were two attempts further to postpone the second reading, either for three weeks or until the following Monday, but those motions fell, and the debate began with Byron's speech.[6] Journalists reported the speech "very incorrectly", and Byron wrote, "I could not recognise myself or anyone else in the Newspapers" (BLJ II, 167). No Tory Lord responded to Byron, and the Lords voted to allow the Bill to pass to the committee stage on the following Monday. Lord Lauderdale, a prominent Scottish Whig, moved that the twelve common-law judges of the realm, who give judicial advice to the

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School: Speaking Out, Talking Back, Acting Up, Bowing Out (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

[3] *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 21 (London: T. C. Hansard, 1812), p. 811.

[4] D. N. Raymond, *The Political Career of Lord Byron* (New York: Henry Holt, 1924), p. 39.

[5] The following narrative of the Bill's progress through parliament draws on the *Journals of the House of Lords*, vol. 48 (London: HMSO, 1812), pp. 593-621, *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, pp. 974-79 and the discussion in Raymond, pp. 44-45.

[6] For the text of the speech, see CMP pp. 22-27.

legislature, be summoned to attend on Monday, but this was negatived. On Friday the Bill was again raised when the Earl of Rosslyn and Lord Lauderdale asked for a protest which they had lodged against it to be "vacated" as "informal and irregular". Their request was granted, and they remade their protest the following Monday, 2 March (it was a leap year) when the Bill came up again, to be put into committee.

The committee stage is a "committee of the whole House" and takes place in the main chamber of the House. All Lords are entitled to attend, and it is at this stage that the bill is debated in detail, and amendments are proposed. It was on this Monday that Byron's 'An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill' was published in the *Morning Chronicle*, a London daily newspaper. After the committee stage, the House hears a report of what happened at that stage, for the benefit of those Lords who did not attend. This usually takes place some weeks later except for bills that are felt to be urgent. For the Frame Bill it happened the very next day, Tuesday, when Lord Walsingham reported amendments to the Bill. Byron scholars have reported this stage incorrectly. Both D. N. Raymond in *The Political Career of Lord Byron*, and following her, Jerome McGann in his commentary to Byron's *Complete Poetical Works*, write that the offence of framebreaking was reduced from a felony to a misdemeanor.[7] But according to *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, which is the forerunner of *Hansard*:

> Earl Grosvenor moved an amendment, making the *attempt* to destroy frames only a misdemeanor instead of a felony without benefit of clergy, which was agreed to.[8]

The editor of the fifteenth edition of Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, which was standard in 1812, noted that "misdemeanors comprehend all indictable offences, which do not amount to felony; [such as] attempts and solicitations to commit felonies".[9] The attempt to commit a

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[7] Raymond, p. 45. CPW III, 391.
[8] *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, p. 1084. My italics.
[9] William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England: Fifteenth edition, with the last corrections of the author; and with notes and additions by Edward Christian, Esq.*, 4 vols (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1809), IV, 5n.

felony was "in many cases a misdemeanor", according to Tomlins' *Law Dictionary* of 1835, which drew extensively on Blackstone.[10] Moreover the distinction between a felony and a misdemeanor was crucial in this case, since, according to Blackstone:

> The idea of felony is indeed so generally connected with that of capital punishment, that we find it hard to separate them; and to this usage the interpretations of the law do now conform. And therefore if a statute makes any new offence felony, the law implies that it shall be punished with death [...] And, in compliance herewith, I shall for the future consider it also in the same light, as a generical term, including all capital crimes below treason[.][11]

As such, an amendment that reduced the offence of framebreaking to a misdemeanor would have wrecked the Bill, since it would have made capital punishment all but impossible, and making the offence capital was the Bill's whole point. No such amendment was proposed, but nonetheless, since Luddites could mount a defence on the grounds that they were guilty only of the lesser offence of *attempting* to destroy weaving frames, this amendment still made a substantial difference. On Thursday 5 March 1812 the amended bill was given its third reading and passed. Following parliamentary protocol, a message was sent to the House Of Commons, desiring their concurrence. The Bill received the Royal assent and became law on 20 March. So, 'An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill' was published while the parliamentary process was still going on, but after Byron's formal contribution to it had ended. This is a poetic event, and a political intervention. To understand the nature of that intervention, we need to investigate both the poem's internal rhetoric and the circumstances of its publication. By framing the poem against the background of the textile industry, which inspired it, and the newspaper industry, which disseminated it, I provide the context necessary to evaluate its agency. In the early years of the nineteenth century both these industries were revolutionised by technical developments,

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[10] Thomas Edlyne Tomlins (with additions by Thomas Colpitts Granger), *The Law Dictionary*, 4th ed., 2 vols (London: J. and W. T. Clarke et al, 1835), entry for "misdemeanor".
[11] Blackstone, IV, 97-98. This understanding was still current in 1835, when Tomlins paraphrased Blackstone closely: "[T]he idea of felony was so generally connected with that of capital punishment, that it seemed hard to separate them: and to this usage the interpretations of law conformed. For if a statute made any new offence felony, the law implied that it should be punished with death." Tomlins, entry for "felony".

which had a very direct impact on the lives of the men and women who worked in them.

The first technological innovation from which the newspaper industry benefited in this period was not a printing press but a machine for making paper. The Fourdrinier papermaking machine automated the manufacture of paper, which had previously been made laboriously and expensively by hand. The machine was developed by brothers Henry and Sealy Fourdrinier and patented in England in 1803. It made paper from rags.[12] This was much faster and more efficient than hand-making paper, and the machine was widely adopted in the first decade of the century. Cheap paper meant cheaper books, journals and newspapers, which could then reach a wider and less elite audience. But the development of papermaking would have been of little value without a correspondent development in printing. Until the end of the eighteenth century, printing presses were made of wood and driven by hand. The pressman pulled a bar, which turned the screw and pressed the paper onto the inked forme (where the type was set). "The major improvements needed to make the hand press more efficient," writes James Moran, "were greater stability of structure; ability to print a forme at one pull; a reduction in manual effort; and an automatic return of the bar after pulling."[13] The invention of the Stanhope press, the first printing press to be built entirely from iron, solved these problems. Charles, Third Earl Stanhope (1753-1816) was dedicated to the advancement of science, and was able to devote considerable resources to his investigations. He invented his press around 1800 (the earliest surviving example is from 1804) but, in a politically charged act of philanthropy, he never patented it,

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[12] The rags were first turned into a liquid pulp. This pulp flowed onto a moving wire-mesh belt, where the water drained out of it and was sucked away, leaving a damp paper web. This passed through a series of steam-heated rollers, which dried the paper, and then between heavy calendar rollers, which gave it a smooth finish. Lee Erickson notes, "Since handmade paper was both harder to work with and had a greater percentage of waste because of defects in individual sheets, machine-made paper not only provided an improvement in the quality of publishing materials but also reduced the costs of printing by about 40 percent. By 1825 over half of all paper in England was made by machine." Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form*, p. 27.

[13] James Moran, *Printing Presses: History and Development from the Fifteenth Century to Modern Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 39.

preferring to make it as widely available as possible. He teamed up with the ironsmith Robert Walker to manufacture it. It is essentially a screw press on which the screw's leverage is compounded many times over by a system of levers. This greatly reduced the effort needed, and made it possible to print a sheet at one pull.

The Stanhope press was rapidly adopted by newspapers, which particularly needed fast printing. Even with the much faster Stanhope press, it was still necessary to set several formes in order to get the paper out on time. *The Times* purchased what it described as a "battalion" of Stanhope presses, operated by a small army of pressmen, on which the paper was printed for the first fourteen years of the nineteenth century.[14] The newspaper's circulation increased dramatically, and the same technology enabled the growth of the whole periodical market. Even before this growth there was considerable anxiety among the Establishment about popular reading and its potential for demagoguery. The Government responded to this anxiety about mob reading by raising advertisement duty and the stamp tax.[15] This made papers costing 6-7d too expensive for all but the wealthier individuals, but coffee houses, gentlemen's clubs, barbers' shops and pubs took in large numbers of papers, and in the pubs they could be read out to those who could not read them for themselves.[16] Its larger circulation enabled *The Times* to increase from four pages to twelve in 1803, and to increase its advertising revenue as more manufacturers realised the advantages of tapping into the emerging mass consumer market.[17] Increased circulation meant increased political clout, and during the alarm of Luddism, a writer in the *Quarterly Review* asserted that "anarchist journalists" were "inflaming the turbulent temper of the manufacturer [i.e. the labourer in manufacturing industry], and disturbing the quiet attachment of

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[14] Ibid. p. 54.
[15] The stamp tax was raised to 2d in 1789, 3½d in 1797 and 4d in 1815. It was reduced to 1d in 1836 and abolished in 1855. G. A. Cranfield, *The Press and Society: From Caxton to Northcliffe* (London: Longman, 1978), p. 89.
[16] See A. Aspinall, 'The Circulation of Newspapers in the Early Nineteenth Century,' *Review of English Studies*, 22 (1946), 29-43.
[17] See Terry Nevett, 'Advertising and Editorial Integrity in the Nineteenth Century', in *The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. by Michael Harris and Alan Lee (Cranbury NJ: Associated University Presses, 1986), pp. 149-67.

the peasant to those institutions under which he and his fathers have dwelt in peace."[18] The *Morning Chronicle*, which published Byron's poem, had become famous for its political reporting since it was founded in 1769. Its first proprietor, William "Memory" Woodfall, would sit in the public gallery of the House of Commons, where note taking was forbidden, and listen to the debates. At the end of the day he would go back to the office and write "sixteen columns of word-for-word report", pioneering a now-familiar style of parliamentary reportage.[19] James Perry became editor in 1789 and under his direction the paper became the leading Whig journal in London.[20] Perry was not afraid of controversy, and was charged with seditious libel in 1793 and 1798, being sentenced to three months in prison on the second occasion. Byron's choice of this paper as a medium through which to publish his poem is an important part of the creation of that poem's meaning. As I will shortly suggest, the way in which the newspaper framed the poem was both empowering and embarrassing.

Like the printing industry, the textile industry had developed new technologies and grown rapidly at the end of the eighteenth century.[21] But it went into crisis in the early nineteenth century, when economic depression at home and the cutting off of export markets in Napoleonic Europe and Revolutionary America hit hard. Wage cutting was endemic in the industry, and many workers suffered drastic hardships as wages fell or failed to keep pace with rising prices. A parliamentary committee investigating the situation in 1812 heard that wages were on average one third lower than they had been in 1807 and before.[22] The workers' distress was exacerbated by at least three other factors. The practice of payment in truck, the introduction of cheaply produced low-quality stockings known as "cut-ups",

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[18] Cited in Cranfield, p. 90.
[19] Stanley Morison, *The English Newspaper* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), p. 165.
[20] See Ian R. Christie, 'James Perry of the *Morning Chronicle*, 1756-1821', in his *Myth and Reality in Late-Eighteenth-Century British Politics and Other Papers* (London: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 334-58.
[21] As an index of this growth, raw cotton imports quintupled between 1780 and 1800. See Asa Briggs, *A Social History of England*, 3rd ed. (London: Penguin, 1999), pp. 206-7.
[22] Frank Ongley Darvall, *Popular Disturbances and Public Order in Regency England*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 33.

and the possibility of hiring juvenile and unskilled labourers owing to the lapsed apprenticeship laws, which flooded the labour market and further depressed wages in a practice known as "colting".[23] The use of new wide weaving frames, which weavers were forced to rent from their employer or from an independent entrepreneur, often at exorbitant rates, also had its part to play in the industry's degradation, and it was this factor that Byron particularly stressed. Between 1780 and 1830 workers were reduced from comparative prosperity and independence to crippling poverty and complete dependence on their employer.

The situation reached a crisis in 1811-12, when what E. P. Thompson calls "the supreme grievance of continuous hunger" was added to existing grievances.[24] The weavers petitioned Parliament for relief, establishing a prototype Trade Union.[25] The Government's refusal to intervene marks "a crisis between paternalism and *laissez-faire*" economics which grew from the new science of political economy.[26] The degradation had begun first in the cotton industry, then in wool and worsted, but Luddism first appeared among the framework-knitters of Byron's Nottinghamshire, who wove stockings and lace. In March 1811 a riot in the Nottinghamshire village of Arnold saw 60 weaving frames broken, and sparked a series of disturbances in the area

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[23] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1965), p. 278. In what follows, I have leant heavily on Thompson's account of the textile industry in this period, as it remains the most comprehensive and impressive. His conclusion that Luddism was always a "*quasi-insurrectionary movement*" (p. 553) is, however, in opposition to Darvall's earlier account, in *Popular Disturbances and Public Order in Regency England*, which sees Luddism as an industrial movement without explicit political aims. The differences are discussed in Angus MacIntyre's introduction to the second edition of Darvall's book. Brian Bailey distinguishes midland from northern Luddites, arguing that there is "no shred of evidence for any political aims" in the midlands, but that many Luddites in Yorkshire and Lancashire "were insurrectionary in temper". Brian Bailey, *The Luddite Rebellion* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998), pp. 145, 147. See also E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The Machine Breakers' in his *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), pp. 5-22 and Malcolm I. Thomis, *The Luddites* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1970).

[24] Thompson, p. 543.

[25] The "combination" acts of 1799 and 1800 reinforced laws making it illegal for workers to organise into unions. Brian Bailey notes that "[t]he effectiveness of the legislation varied from trade to trade. Unions were often merely driven underground, or survived in the guise of friendly societies. Many illegal unions continued to exist [...] in the textile industries" (Bailey, xv).

[26] Thompson, p. 544.

that lasted several weeks. But it was in November that, according to E. P. Thompson, "Luddism appeared in a much more disciplined form":

> Frame-breaking was no longer the work of "rioters" but of smaller, disciplined bands, who moved rapidly from village to village at night. From Nottinghamshire it spread to parts of Leicestershire and Derbyshire, and continued without intermission until February 1812.[27]

The Government, fearing jacobinism and mob violence, moved to quell the disturbances and restore what was for the weavers an intolerable order, with the introduction of the Frame Bill.

Byron seems to have placed more weight on the role of new technology in producing the Luddite disturbances than recent historians do.[28] He noted to Lord Holland, in the letter in which he begins to work out the argument for his speech, that "by the adoption of a certain kind of frame 1 man performs ye. work of 7 – 6 are thus thrown out of business" (BLJ II, 165). Byron learned his speech by heart, and practised some parts of it in front of Robert Charles Dallas, who reported that "he altered the natural tone of his voice, which was sweet and round, into a formal drawl, and he prepared his features for a part – it was a youth declaiming a task."[29] But regardless of how effective Byron's oratory was, the Whigs were in opposition, and it was unlikely that they could block the Bill's passage. Byron, however, had other methods of resistance. We don't know when he wrote 'An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill'; there is no extant manuscript, and the only letter that refers to the poem is one to Perry, the editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, dated 1 March, which contains a correction to the poem (which Perry had presumably received in a previous and now lost letter). Perry had therefore accepted the poem within two days of Byron's speech. The poem has left no trace in the memoirs or letters of Byron's circle, so it seems likely that he didn't tell many people about it.[30] It

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[27] Ibid. p. 554.
[28] Hobsbawm, for example, makes clear that "in none of these cases [...] was there any question of hostility to machines as such." p. 8.
[29] Dallas, p. 203.
[30] Jeffrey W. Vail has suggested that Byron might have shown the poem to Samuel Rogers, and discussed it with Thomas Moore. Jeffrey W. Vail, *The Literary Relationship of Lord Byron and Thomas Moore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 51.

was published anonymously, and not known to be Byron's until 1880. "I wish you could insert it tomorrow for a particular reason," Byron directed the editor (BLJ II, 166). On the following day the Bill was due to be raised in the House again, and put into committee. Lauderdale and Rosslyn would enter their protest against it, as Byron may well have known. He wanted the poem's stinging satire to be ringing in their Lordships' ears as they debated.

The ode satirically celebrates the achievement of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Eldon, and the Home Secretary, Richard Ryder, in coming up with such a solution to the problem of the troublesome weavers. Byron adopts the voice of a Tory, but the mask is always slipping to reveal his satirical intents. He obliquely engages with the discourse of political economy in the lines:

> Men are more easily made than machinery –
> Stockings fetch better prices than lives –
> Gibbets on Sherwood will *heighten* the scenery,
> Showing how Commerce, *how* Liberty thrives!
>
> (13-16)

mocking the Malthusian fear of the rate at which the poor breed. The Government attempts in the Frame Bill to safeguard the rule of law, enforcing the harsh (so-called) laws of political economy on a population who, it is felt, would submit contentedly if only they could understand that a *laissez-faire* approach made for the long-term good. The Tory ministers draw a line beyond which the weavers may not step on pain of death. Byron criticises them for stepping beyond the pale of responsible and benevolent governance. Men must not be sacrificed to technological advances, nor commerce pursued at the expense of liberty. By putting "Commerce" and "Liberty" together, Byron suggests that for his imagined speaker, they are synonyms. The free market makes the free man. In fact, the poem argues, there is considerable friction between the two terms, and the Government is on the wrong side. But not everyone takes its view:

> Some folks for certain have thought it was shocking,
> When Famine appeals and when Poverty groans,
> That life should be valued at less than a stocking,
> And breaking of frames lead to breaking of bones.
> If it should prove so, I trust, by this token,

(And who will refuse to partake in the hope?)
That the frames of the fools may be first to be *broken*,
Who, when asked for a *remedy*, sent down a *rope*.

(25-32)

If framebreaking is to result in violence against individuals, Byron argues from the safety of his anonymity, let it be against the framers of the Bill, not against the framebreakers. The pun on "frames", as both weaving technology and bodies, suggests the threat of personal violence which is just beneath the surface of Luddism (and which would, in fact, shortly burst out), and the hypocrisy of a legal system that would put down violence with violence. A Government which would deploy against its own people "Grenadiers, Volunteers, Bow-street Police, / Twenty-two Regiments, a score of Jack Ketches," and in fact more troops than had been engaged in the Peninsula War, twelve thousand in all, is shown to be scared and unforgivably callous (18-19). Such violence defends not the rule of law but the interests of the factory owners and the ruling oligarchy. The fools will get their comeuppance, "I trust, by this token". "[B]y this token" means both by the logic that leads from framebreaking to personal violence (judicial or otherwise) and by, as a result of, this poem. The ode itself is a token, with currency in the framebreaking debate, with political clout.

Discerning and evaluating the nature and extent of that clout – the poem's agency – is the challenge for a historical criticism committed to finding meaning in poetic events and the intersections of power-relations that they crystallise. The token of the ode will be *only* a token gesture unless it is inscribed within a frame which gives it a degree of power. Malcolm Kelsall, in one of the few critical responses to the ode, argues that it appropriates the crisis for an attack on the Government, without proposing any remedy, "that being the classic Whig strategy."[31] As such "this jingle" fails completely for Kelsall as a political poem, in line with his argument that "the life of Byron is of no political significance".[32] However, Kelsall writes that the poem appeared "subsequent to the debate" and was Byron's "verse account of

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[31] Malcolm Kelsall, *Byron's Politics* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1987), p. 50.
[32] Ibid. pp. 49, 2.

what had happened".[33] This mistakes the chronology of the Bill's passage through Parliament, inaccurately suggesting that Byron is powerlessly commenting on a completed event, whereas in fact he is intervening in an ongoing process, in a poem that may well have influenced the important amendment that reduced attempted framebreaking to a misdemeanor. Byron had large ambitions for his own agency as a peer and a poet, and Kelsall underestimates the agency of this poem. To understand that agency, I need to turn back to the context in which the poem was published and republished.

Newspaper publication empowered Byron in several ways. He could respond quickly to the Bill through that medium, speaking on Thursday and publishing the poem the following Monday. He could also guarantee a large, politically concerned and well-informed audience. The *Morning Chronicle* had reported the parliamentary debate on Friday's front page, including a one-paragraph précis of Byron's speech, so regular readers of the paper were familiar with the issues. Since it appeared in the leading Whig journal of the day, many of the Lords must have read the poem before they went to the House that morning to consider the Bill again, and although no records exist, it seems likely that the House of Lords itself took a copy of the paper.[34] But the way the paper framed the poem may have undercut its chance to make a difference. The *Morning Chronicle* consisted of only four pages (i.e. a single sheet folded in half), each of which had five columns. Since 2 March was a Monday, and there was no news from Parliament to report from the previous day, the front and back pages were entirely devoted to advertising. Page one contained advertisements for a variety of goods and services, including announcements of lectures, bankruptcies, usurers, "New-invented folding round hats" and "Bradberry's patent spectacles". Most of the reportage was on page two and the first column of page three. Page three also contained a gossip column, including a report on the King's health, theatre reviews, a report on Humphry Davy's recent lecture, and a

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[33] Ibid. p. 48.
[34] The House of Lords Library was established in 1826. No records exist of newspapers supplied to the House before that date.

note on ladies' fashions for March. At the bottom of the third column readers were informed of an "extraordinary circumstance":

> A few days ago a cat, belonging to Mr Merle, auctioneer, of Brighton, gave birth to three kittens, each of which has two heads! – They are all alive at the present moment, and free to the inspection of the curious.[35]

Byron's poem was at the top of the next column. It was immediately followed by two epigrams, also by anonymous contributors, who exercised their wit on "the recent loppings in Bushy Park" and on the unlikely subject of a legal case for slander being fought between two Jews. Framed by such light comedy on both sides, Byron's political ode was not in auspicious company.

The one thing that would have made it blaze out of the page and into every eye – his name – he withheld, writing to the editor, "of course, do *not* put *my name* to the thing" (BLJ II, 166). Even before his authorial celebrity began in earnest, the poetic comment of a Lord on the business of the House of Lords would have drawn attention to the poem, not least from the legislators themselves. A public pledge of support for the Luddites' version of direct action would have confirmed the workers' belief that the disturbances were "countenanced by individuals of a higher class and description, who are to declare themselves at a future time."[36] Yet Byron's name did feature in that day's *Morning Chronicle*. The last paragraph on page two read:

> Lord BYRON, who spoke on the Nottingham Felony Bill on Thursday, evinced considerable eloquence. – His talents have been already established by his literary productions, but it does not always happen that able writers are gifted with the powers of elocution.[37]

The *Chronicle* had already reported Byron's speech, without editorial comment, and its description of his "literary productions" is generous, given

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[35] The *Morning Chronicle*, 2 March 1812, p. 3. It is tempting to speculate that Mr Merle may have arranged this paragraph as publicity for his auction house. On the practice of "puffing" in newspapers, see Nevett.
[36] Reported by the House of Commons' Secret Committee, cited in Kelsall, p. 52.
[37] The *Morning Chronicle*, 2 March 1812, p. 2.

that he had only published *Hours of Idleness* and *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. Both these books had received some attention from reviewers, but neither had made his name.[38] Although James Perry kept his promise not to put Byron's name to the poem, he inserted a compliment to his noble contributor which drew attention to his poetry and his politics. The *Morning Chronicle*, then, enabled Byron's poem to reach the eyes of the legislators before the end of the debate, but framed it between light-hearted squibs which detracted from its interventionist potential.

But critics have been mistaken in their assumption that, because this was the only printing of the poem that Byron authorised, it was the only printing to occur. In Nottinghamshire, where the insurrectionary action was taking place, there were two local newspapers: the *Nottingham Journal* and the *Nottingham Review and General Advertiser*. The *Nottingham Journal* came out weekly on Saturday and was broadly Tory in its political allegiance. It reported on Luddite disturbances and the Frame Bill debates throughout this period, mentioning Byron by name on 7 March 1812 in its account of the House of Lords debates. It did not regularly publish any poetry. Its rival, the *Nottingham Review*, was published weekly on Friday and had a broadly Whig allegiance. In the issue for 6 March 1812, the first to appear after Byron's poem was first published, there were extensive reports on the Frame Bill debates. On page four the editors wrote that they had left out their regular comic column of "lucubrations" in order to make room for more information on this important bill. The Frame Bill, they noted "met with a formidable opposition in the House of Lords, and by no member of that august assembly more than by a Noble Lord from this neighbourhood."[39] On

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[38] Nicholas Mason has, however, questioned the received opinion that *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* made Byron a public figure overnight. He emphasises both the extent to which Byron was known in literary circles as the author of *English Bards* and the amount of indirect pre-publication publicity that *Childe Harold* received. See Nicholas Mason, 'Building Brand Byron: Early-Nineteenth-Century Advertising and the Marketing of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 63 (2002), 411-41. Byron had certainly achieved a degree of recognition before he published *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, but I am arguing that his public profile became that of a celebrity only as a result of that poem. Thomas Moore asserted that "his fame had not to wait for any of the ordinary gradations, but seemed to spring up, like the palace of a fairy tale, in a night." Moore, *Life*, I, 346.

[39] *Nottingham Review and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties*, 6 March 1812, p. 4.

the same page they printed an "abstract" of the Frame Bill, and immediately below that they reprinted Byron's ode.

The ode appeared on a different page to the only other poem printed in that issue of the *Review*, which was also a political poem that mentioned Luddism.[40] Framed by political reportage and editorial, it was presented in the context of informed political debate, and not in the company of comic epigrams, as it had been in the *Morning Chronicle*. Geographically closer to the riots that occasioned it, the poem must have been read out in Nottingham's pubs, and may have circulated orally among the weavers there. When it was reprinted, 'An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill' took a step closer to being a genuine working-class ballad, of which there are many examples associated with the Luddites.[41] The fact that this reprinting appears to have been unknown to all previous critics of the poem may have led them to underestimate its agency. But, as with its first appearance, this republication constrained the poem even as it empowered it. In the penultimate line, the word "frames" in the phrase "the frames of the fools, may be first to be *broken*" was replaced with a long dash.[42] The editors of the *Nottingham Review* took fright and tried to take the sting out of the poem's tail. They were almost certainly unaware that the poem was by the "Noble Lord from this neighbourhood" whose speech they had praised, and Byron, in London, was almost certainly unaware that his poem had been reprinted. The infrastructure of industrial publication that made Byron's

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[40] This anonymous poem was called 'Industry Distressed: A True Tale' and appeared on p. 3.

[41] E. P. Thompson mentions the weavers' poetry, and quotes at length from one of the "Jone o' Grinfilt" ballads on pp. 322-23. In a collection of documents reprinted from the public records office, Malcolm I. Thomis provides examples of a Luddite song (pp. 1-2) and poem (pp. 55-56). See *Luddism in Nottinghamshire*, ed. by Malcolm I. Thomis (London: Phillimore, 1972). For a general, Marxist survey across a broad historical span, see John Miller, 'Songs of the Labour Movement' in *The Luddites and Other Essays* ed. by Lionel M. Munby (London: Michael Katanka, 1971), pp. 115-42.

[42] Since this reprint of the poem was unknown to Jerome McGann, the variant is not recorded in the textual apparatus in CPW III, 9. As well as incidental textual differences of punctuation, capitalisation and italicisation, the *Nottingham Review* text differs from the *Morning Chronicle* text in two further ways. It prints the poem as eight quatrains instead of four octaves, and it alters the first line from "Oh well done Lord E[ldo]n! and better Lord R[yde]r!" to "Oh! well done Lord El[do]n! and better done R[yd]er!" This corrects Byron's error; Richard Ryder, the Home Secretary, was not a Lord.

intervention felt in both the House of Lords and the mills of Nottinghamshire also drastically curtailed his control over the text of his poem.

As a political intervention, Byron's poem benefited greatly from the rapid printing and wide circulation of newspapers in the period. This was made possible by advances in technology which paralleled those in the textile industry. Industrialisation's upheavals came slightly later to printing, when the Stanhope press was superseded by the powerful cultural technology of the steam press. Friedrich Koenig, the inventor of the cylinder press, which harnessed the power of steam to printing for the first time, came to London in 1806, where he began to develop his press for the printer Thomas Bensley. Koenig teamed up with Andreas Bauer, an engineer, and they developed the cylinder press over a number of years. In 1810 they were still working on the Stanhope screw and platen model, but by 1813 they had a cylinder machine ready to show to newspaper proprietors.[43] James Perry of the *Morning Chronicle* didn't buy, but John Walter II, of *The Times*, ordered two "double" machines, which took Koenig another year to develop and build.[44] The first issue of *The Times* to be printed by steam was that of 29 November 1814. Walter had installed the new presses in secret in a building adjacent to *The Times*' offices. He told the pressmen, who worked the battalion of Stanhope presses, to wait for late news from the Continent. This was not an unusual occurrence, as *The Times* prided itself on its foreign correspondents. In fact there was no late news. At six o'clock in the morning, Walter went into the press room and told the men that the whole issue had already been printed by steam, and that the entire printing workforce was redundant. No doubt mindful of the Luddite disturbances in the Midlands, he went accompanied by a force of men to control the pressmen if they turned violent, and promised to continue their wages until

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[43] Moran, pp. 106-7.

[44] It has unfortunately not been possible to discover exactly when the *Morning Chronicle* began using the steam press. The two important facts here are that the paper did not use the steam press when it published Byron's 'Ode', but that adopting the new technology soon became essential in the crowded periodical market.

they could be found similar employment.[45] It must have been a tense moment. The pressmen, astonished, departed peacefully.

The Times editorial for that day declared, "Our journal of this day presents to the public the practical result of the greatest improvement connected with printing, since the discovery of the art itself." Describing printing as an art and Koenig as "the artist", the editorial presented the new technology as "a system of machinery almost organic", deploying a rhetoric of the natural in support of technological advance. Such an advance "relieves the human frame of its most laborious efforts" so that "little more remains for man to do than to attend upon and watch this unconscious agent in its operations." The steam press is presented as a labour-saving device, freeing men from the troublesome business of working at the hand press. The redundant pressmen, looking for other work, are not mentioned. Finally, the editorial figures the paper's economic speculation on the new machine and the successful return on its investment as a primarily emotional matter:

> Our share in this event has, indeed, only been in the application of the discovery, under an agreement with the Patentees, to our own particular business; yet few can conceive – even with this limited interest – the various disappointments and deep anxiety to which we have for a long course of time been subjected.[46]

Describing how the invention of the engineer Koenig has superseded that of the aristocratic philanthropist and radical Stanhope, *The Times* overlooks the fact that the press could not have been developed without investment from speculative publishers, eager to make money from it; suggests that more than a business deal this has been an adventure "few can conceive"; and foregrounds, with the tone of a new father, the "deep anxiety" "we" felt. Again, that "we" does not include the redundant pressmen. So Walter deployed a three-pronged strategy in managing his workmen. To threaten them with a force of men who would answer their violence with violence; to conciliate them with a promise to continue their wages for the time being; to elide their distress from public notice in his editorial.

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[45] Moran, pp. 107-08.
[46] *The Times*, 29 November 1814, cited by Moran, p. 108.

Following the story of publishing's industrialisation this far enables us to see the parallels between the industries of textile production and printing, and to locate 'An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill' at the intersection of my three historical frames. Firstly, the industrialisation of textile manufacture and its adoption of new technology. Secondly, a similar process in printing. Thirdly, the process by which the Frame Bill became law. There are two ways to theorise the position, at this nexus, of Byron's poem. The first way is to view the poem as part of the problem with which it deals. In this view, Byron's poem about the dangers of industrialisation is tainted by its contact with industrial publishing. The poem is itself an industrial production in a technologically developing industry and therefore cannot be a neutral place from which Byron can comment on the issue. As such, Byron becomes complicit in the process of dehumanising industrialisation that he deplores, when he benefits from the march of technology. Out on a limb, Byron buys the poem's political clout only by incurring the culpable cost of involvement with the enemy. In this view, Byron is embarrassed by industrial publishing. Indeed, Byron's celebrity would continue to be closely bound up with the introduction of the steam press, as that technology made possible new forms of public life. When the 'Ode' came out, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* was already at the printers. Just eight days later it would burst forth, making Byron famous and associating him firmly with the new printing technologies that met the demand for that poem and the tales that appeared in rapid succession afterwards. "I am persuaded", James Webster told him, "that you must write by steam."[47] The problems with this aggressive characterisation, however, are severe. Byron would have known very little about the developments in printing, and even if he had known more, this is a situation he could do very little to avoid. Blake had produced books by hand that remained completely within his control and outside the sphere of industrial publishing. But Blake's disciplines were not available to Byron, and Blake's books could not be produced as fast or distributed as widely as

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[47] Cited in George Paston and Peter Quennel, *To Lord Byron: Feminine Profiles from Unpublished Letters 1807-1824* (London: John Murray, 1939), p. 101.

the *Morning Chronicle* or the *Nottingham Review*, and therefore could not have the same impact. And the ode did make an impact, reaching a large and informed audience before the end of the Lords' debate.

The second way to characterise this nexus of forces is to see the poem as part of the solution. In this view, Byron appropriates the technology of the press, repossessing it from those who, like Walter, would use it without compassion for the men who worked in the industry, and following the example of Stanhope, who sponsored technological advance for all. Championing the Luddites, Byron puts industrial printing in the service of the workers, asserting that technology itself is not the problem, whether in weaving or in printing, but the uses to which it is put. As such the poem provides an example of how industrialisation can be turned to humane ends. Seen from this angle, Byron does not "buy" the poem's agency at any price, but takes it right from under the nose of the industrial revolution. He is a fifth columnist, redirecting the energies of early industrial capitalism from within. He embarrasses industrial publishing. There are also problems with this position, but less fatal ones. The trouble is that, as I've already suggested, this is not the expression of Byron's untrammelled agency, as it might appear to be. Byron can't control the text of his poem, or the text that surrounds it, in the newspapers, nor maintain his anonymity uncompromised. There is a trade off here between two kinds of agency. Firstly the poet's agency over the production of his text, which Blake strove to maintain, and secondly the agency of the text in the world, its ability to make a difference. Byron relaxes his control over his text in order to guarantee it greater worldly agency. Most historicist criticism has been sceptical about the political agency either of individuals or of texts. Having inherited the Foucauldian idea that power is all-pervasive and endowed with an unending capacity to stage, contain and co-opt its own subversion, critics have been profoundly pessimistic about the possibility of a political intervention that would avoid unwitting collusion with its opponent. Distinguishing between kinds of agency helps to temper that pessimism. The infrastructure of industrial publication, then, both empowers and compromises Byron in very specific ways.

Although 'An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill' is in many ways untypical of Byron's work, the complexities of the poem's position in Romantic political and print culture are representative of the complexities of the interpretative field that stretches between the poles of Lord Byron the cultural producer and Lord Byron the cultural product. Byron is constantly in motion between these two poles, on the axis between producer and product, actor and acted-on. The example of 'An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill' suggests that the attempt to map his movements on that axis should be a central concern of Byron's critics. Reframing the ode, and lingering over the opening frames of Byron's celebrity career, makes visible the enabling, but potentially embarrassing, industrial technologies that will be a crucial component of the modern celebrity apparatus. Everyone involved had an interest in keeping those technologies concealed and mystifying the material process through which the celebrity communicated with his audience. Situating Byron's agency within industrial culture sets the stage for a study of how he manipulated it and how it manipulated him, and an argument about how the technology of the press, which produced opportunities for new kinds of political engagement, also created a demand for a new kind of emotional engagement, in which readers would use industrially mediated texts and images to learn to love the idea of a man whom they had never met.

CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE: BEGINNING THE HERMENEUTIC OF INTIMACY

I would begin at the beginning, if it were clear where *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* begins. But the reader encounters a whole series of paratexts which begin and re-begin the poem, and crosses one threshold of interpretation after another.[1] The title is followed by a subtitle, epigraph, prose preface, addition to the preface (added in the fourth edition), prefatory poem 'To Ianthe' (added in the seventh edition) and the heading "Canto One" before, finally, the opening stanza.[2] *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* starts repeatedly, and Byron repeatedly tried to start over by adding new material to the beginning.[3] The poem's prefatory material and first two stanzas dramatise Byron's attempt to figure out a relationship with his readership, and to figure it into his writing. In the first two stanzas, written a year and eight months apart, he employed conventions that targeted two different audiences.[4] During those twenty months, Byron's sense of his relationship with his readers shifted drastically. This chapter investigates ways in which he configured and refigured the relationship between writer and reader in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, becoming a celebrity in the process. I show the circumstances in which the collaborative, encoded intimacy of a coterie was replaced by the constructed hermeneutic intimacy between producer and consumer in industrial culture. That largely contingent shift marks the beginning of Byron's celebrity career.

The poem's compositional beginnings are as difficult to locate as its formal opening. Byron began the original draft on 31 October 1809

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[1] See Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
[2] The dedicatory letter to Hobhouse complicates the beginning still further. First printed with Canto Four, it commends the poem to Byron's friend "in its completed state" and seems intended to be retroactive (CPW II, 124). The dedication begins the poem all over again, gathering the poem's parts into a unity which, it implies, is only now visible but was always present.
[3] *Don Juan* begins with similar complications. The title is followed by an epigraph (which was the source of some contention), a prose preface (not published until 1901), a verse dedication (not published until 1833) and the heading "Canto One" before the first stanza.
[4] The second stanza was part of the original draft, begun on 31 October 1809 (CPW II, 266). The first stanza was added in late July 1811 (CPW II, 267).

according to the note he later made on the fair copy. But only a fragment of this draft survives.[5] Byron kept quiet about his poem, not mentioning it in a (surviving) letter for over a year. He hinted at its existence to his mother on 14 January 1811, and immediately disclaimed any desire to publish:

> I keep no journal, nor have I any intention of scribbling my travels. – I have done with authorship, and if in my last production I have convinced the critics or the world, I was something more than they took me for, I am satisfied, nor will I hazard *that reputation* by a future effort. – It is true I have some others in manuscript, but I leave them for those who come after me, and if deemed worth publishing, they may serve to prolong my memory, when I myself shall cease to remember.
>
> (BLJ II, 35)

Although in fact he cannot leave authorship alone, Byron prefers to play it safe, and not gamble his current reputation on the possibility of a greater fame. When he returned to England he all but denied *Childe Harold's* existence to Robert Charles Dallas, giving him *Hints from Horace* first and only speaking of "a great many stanzas in Spenser's measure" the following day.[6] But while the poem's beginnings are fugitive, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* decisively begins Byron's celebrity. I will unfold the distance between the audience Byron's poem set out to address and the audience it found. I show how circumstances pitched Byron into an apparently unmediated relationship with a large reading public, which he had not imagined when he began the poem, and produced the hermeneutic of intimacy, which was crucial to his celebrity.

Even at the beginning of the poem proper, Byron refuses to begin properly. In each of the first two stanzas, he shakes up two sets of conventions for beginning. These two conventions imply two kinds of audience, forming what Edward Said calls "transitive beginnings" that inaugurate a project "with (or for) an anticipated end, or at least expected

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[5] The fragment of the original draft is designated MS Y (location: Yale), the fair copy is designated MS M (location: Murray Archives). See commentary in CPW II, 265-69.
[6] Dallas, p. 113.

continuity".[7] The conventions locate the poem in two traditions, envisage two kinds of continuation and target two sorts of readership. Byron's false starts when beginning to write, I contend, reflect his uncertainty about who will read. The first stanza employs the conventions for invoking the muse while maintaining a sceptical and sophisticated detachment. Byron's invocation is immediately deformed when he refuses to play the game:

> Oh, thou! in Hellas deem'd of heav'nly birth,
> Muse! form'd or fabled at the minstrel's will!
> Since sham'd full oft by later lyres on earth,
> Mine dares not call thee from thy sacred hill:
> Yet there I've wander'd by thy vaunted rill;
> Yes! sigh'd o'er Delphi's long deserted shrine,
> Where, save that feeble fountain, all is still;
> Nor mote my shell awake the weary Nine
> To grace so plain a tale – this lowly lay of mine.
>
> (1. 1)

The muse is self-consciously presented as a poetic fiction; faith in her inspiration occurs elsewhere and at other times, in "Hellas". This invocation comes after the (imaginary) age of faith in the muses, when muses are created by poets and do not create them.[8] But doubt about the muse's existence is not what stops the poet calling on her. Instead, Byron turns away from the sceptical position of the first two lines and adopts the conventional stance of playing down his poem's claims on the goddess's attention. He arrives belatedly, in a debased and mundane age, with only a "lowly lay" to sing. And yet Byron claims an alternative authority, because he has been to the home of the muses himself. The first stanza's twists and turns display an ambivalent attitude toward the conventions of public poetry.

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[7] Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (London: Granta Books, 1997), p. 72. Said distinguishes "transitive" beginnings from "intransitive" origins. "Transitive beginnings" are the inaugural moments of human projects: more or less constructed commencements. Origins, or "intransitive beginnings", incessantly fold back upon themselves in search of an originary moment with nothing before it, a commencement *ex nihilo* which is ultimately not human but divine. See also A. D. Nuttall, *Openings: Narrative Beginnings from the Epic to the Novel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

[8] Before proceeding to an analysis of openings in realist novels, Victor Brombert briefly sketches the "gradual relegation of the muse to a secondary role, and ultimately [...] her disappearance, until the epic beginning is itself thematized [...] [B]eginning [thus] becomes", for Byron, "an autonomous literary problem" (p. 493). Victor Brombert, 'Opening Signals in Narrative,' *New Literary History,* 11 (1980), 489-502.

In an uneasy combination of self-assertion and *diminutio*, the self-authorising poet, when coming before the public, feels the need to call on the aid of a muse in whom he professes not to believe.

The poem begins again in the second stanza by rattling another set of opening conventions. "Whilome in Albion's isle there dwelt a youth" recalls *The Faerie Queene*'s first line and, along with the stanza's form and archaic diction, signals a burlesque Spenserianism (1. 2). There was a revival of interest in Spenser by both scholarly commentators and poetic imitators in the second half of the eighteenth century, which spawned, and was reinforced by, editions, anthologies and educational practices that appeared in mid-century and substantially shaped the poet's subsequent reception.[9] While Spenser's eighteenth-century imitators revived interest in his poetic practice, they did not necessarily endorse his ideology. By Byron's time, Spenserianism instead connoted Whiggism, a somewhat quaint and burlesqued antiquarianism and, given Spenser's difficulty, a degree of erudition.[10] Greg Kucich has shown how pervasive this tradition's influence on Romanticism was, and Byron's Preface makes his debt explicit, mentioning James Thomson and James Beattie as his most immediate antecedents.[11] Re-beginning the poem, the second stanza settles into a burlesque Spenserian romance centred on Harold and narrated with ironic moralising.[12] Each of the first two stanzas, then, is shaped in ironic relation to two generic sets of opening conventions. Part of the difficulty of beginning to read *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* lies in the effort of orientating oneself in

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[9] David Hill Radcliffe observes that "Of the better-known eighteenth century poets, only Johnson and Goldsmith did not imitate or burlesque Spenser in verse." David Hill Radcliffe, *Edmund Spenser: A Reception History* (Columbia: Camden House, 1996), p. 53. Richard Frushell discusses Johnson's and Goldsmith's reactions to Spenser. Richard Frushell, *Edmund Spenser in the Early Eighteenth Century: Education, Imitation, and the Making of a Literary Model* (Pittsburgh, PN: Duquesne University Press, 1999), esp. pp. 121-26, 139-43.

[10] Radcliffe, pp. 34, 75.

[11] Greg Kucich also notes that "Byron was reading Vicesimus Knox's *Elegant Extracts*, which includes numerous passages from *The Faerie Queene* and Spenser's eighteenth century imitators, as he began work on *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*." Greg Kucich, *Keats, Shelley and Romantic Spenserianism* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), p. 113.

[12] Cf. Mark Storey's comment that "*Childe Harold* announces itself as a curiosity, reaching for some of that medieval quaintness that had already served Coleridge well enough". Mark Storey, *Byron and the Eye of Appetite* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), p. 82.

relation to these potentially contradictory signals, and working out what kind of poem this is.[13]

Byron's preface implies a Spenserian line of descent via Ariosto to Thomson, Beattie and Byron. But a genealogy of poets will not stand alone: it requires a genealogy of readers. James Thomson's *The Castle of Indolence* (1748) addressed a double audience. Fifteen years in the writing, it began as a private poem and only later evolved a public dimension. Thomson's friend and biographer Patrick Murdoch wrote that "It was, at first, little more than a few detached stanzas, in the way of raillery on himself, and on some of his friends, who would reproach him with indolence, while he thought them, at least, as indolent as himself." "But he saw very soon," Murdoch continues, "that the subject deserved to be treated more seriously, and in a form fitted to convey one of the most important moral lessons."[14] Thomson's poem therefore had a dual readership, with a coterie of friends standing between the poet and the public. Byron's Spenserian second stanza imagines a similarly split audience. This point of departure envisages a destination with a limited, sophisticated and sympathetic audience of friends who would match the poet's claim to step into a tradition of poets by stepping into a tradition of reading, taking their place in the line that descends from the coterie audience to whom Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* was directed.[15] These were the young men who would recognise their 1809 party at Newstead Abbey in the description of Harold's ancestral home:

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[13] Theodore Redpath notes that "*Childe Harold* was [...] a new *kind* of work, and a number of the critics were puzzled as to what kind of a thing it was." Theodore Redpath, *The Young Romantics and Critical Opinion, 1807-1824* (London: Harrap, 1973), p. 180. And Philip Martin suggests that "The Preface [...] seems to indicate that Byron is unsure of the kind of poem he has written". Philip Martin, *Byron: A Poet Before his Public* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 9.

[14] Cited in James Sambrook, *James Thomson 1700-1748: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 263, 264.

[15] Philip Martin contrasts the first readers of *The Castle of Indolence* and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, suggesting that Byron takes on certain elements of Thomson's style, but without a comparable audience. This view holds for the audience that the published poem found, but does not take account of shifts in the way Byron imagined his audience while writing. Martin, *Byron*, p. 18.

Monastic dome! condemned to uses vile!
Where Superstition once had made her den
Now Paphian girls were known to sing and smile;
And monks might deem their time was come agen,
If ancient tales say true, nor wrong these holy men.

(1. 7)

The mock-sententiousness, signalled by the exclamation marks and the comic archaic spelling of "agen", enlists the shared memory of dressing up as monks at Newstead to poke fun at arid pieties.[16] This mode, signalled by the second stanza, may raise hackles among the staid public, but is certain to raise a laugh among his friends.

The first stanza, a late addition to the manuscript, addresses an audience familiar with the conventions of epic invocation. Unlike the audience implied by stanza two, this audience is not divided into those who get the in-jokes and those who don't. Stanza one requires its readers to have a working knowledge of public poetic conventions, but none of them need have the kind of private knowledge of the poet that the references to Newstead play on. While both conventions require the competance of Stanley Fish's "informed reader", Byron also demanded a second kind of knowledge from some of his readers, as Thomson had done.[17] This was the specific initiation to otherwise hidden meanings, which they gained through knowledge of the poet's life. I contend that when Byron began writing *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, he imagined a small audience of friends who would mediate between him and the unpredictable reaction of a larger and more public audience. The loss of that sense of a mediating audience plunged him headlong into celebrity.

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage became the poem it is, and Byron became the celebrity he was, as a result of shifts in his sense of these two audiences. Between *Childe Harold's* first draft and the addition of 'To

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[16] See Marchand, I, 173-74.
[17] Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (London: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 48.

Ianthe', Byron's idea of the audience for his poem changed significantly. This argument requires that the poem be viewed neither as an ahistorical conceptual unity, nor as a single publication event. Rather, the poem must be seen as the sum of its several states, extending through stages of composition, revision and publication in multiple editions. The received view of Byron's manuscript revisions is that he began writing a burlesque Romance in a broadly comic and satiric style, which set out to recount his travels and attack various aspects of British policy. When he returned to England, however, a series of deaths caused Byron to rework the poem, making it more despondent, and ending it on an elegiac note close to despair.[18] This account's limitation is that it views the poem as developing toward the point of publication in response to the effects of events on Byron's state of mind. This truncates the poem's evolution, which continued beyond its first publication. It also mistakes the significance for the poem of the deaths of Matthews and Edleston. These deaths left Byron feeling not only bereft of friends, but also deprived of a coterie audience. Between his first draft and his final revision, Byron lost one set of readers (whose spokesman would have been Charles Skinner Matthews) and found another (whose projection is Lady Charlotte Harley). This movement from one audience to another is the movement into celebrity, where the difference between a spokesman who can answer back and a projection who enables fantasies marks the start of a new relationship between Byron and his audience.

Facing the common Romantic experience of alienation between author and audience, Byron targeted a coterie audience with his private references and ironic Spenserianism. This arrangement would guarantee that someone would read the poem sympathetically, and would offer some

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[18] Jerome McGann advanced this view in *Fiery Dust*, where he writes that "the theme of Cantos I-II is [...] the painful education of the poet into a more sensitive and reliable subjective moral awareness". Jerome J. McGann, *Fiery Dust: Byron's Poetic Development* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 58. He restated it in his commentary in CPW II, 271.

compensation in the face of widespread hostility or indifference.[19] His reading-circle formed in Cambridge, where he met John Cam Hobhouse, Scrope Berdmore Davies, Francis Hodgson, Douglas Kinnaird and Charles Skinner Matthews. Byron wrote "[Matthews], Hobhouse, D[avies], and myself, formed a coterie of our own at Cambridge and elsewhere" (BLJ II, 93).[20] This circle of friends formed through the Cambridge Whig club, the party at Newstead in 1809 and their shared fascination with classical homoerotica.[21] The leading light of the group, both intellectually and socially, was Matthews. The son of a Hertfordshire MP, Matthews was a brilliant scholar, a sparkling wit, a sceptic, a sodomite and a radical. He occupied Byron's Cambridge rooms while Byron was away and led the revelry at Newstead – pretending to be a ghost to frighten Hobhouse and threatening to throw the tedious Webster out of the window.[22] "There was the stamp of immortality in all he said or did" wrote Byron, "I was indeed so sensible of his infinite superiority that though I did not envy, I stood in awe of it" (BLJ II, 93). Matthews was at the centre of a close-knit group of university contemporaries who shared similar views and experiences. The coterie's reading of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* would stand reassuringly alongside its more uncertain reception by a wider audience. These cognoscenti could be relied upon to lend a sympathetic ear.

This group developed a shared vocabulary of playfully coded references, which revolved around their necessarily secretive sexual dissidence. This collective discourse appears clearly in the exchange of

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[19] Lucy Newlyn has drawn attention to the importance of "communal reading scenes", especially for the first generation of Romantic poets (p. 17). She shows how coterie reading-circles were satirised as "a method of self-defence" and asserts that: "the persistence of anachronistic systems of reception was a crucial component in the protective armoury of authorship at this time" (pp. 23, 24).

[20] I would therefore amend Philip Martin's claim that "At the time he wrote *Childe Harold* Byron was a lord with no lordly friends, a gentleman of fashion without a coterie" (Martin, *Byron*, p. 18). This is true by the time the poem is published, but not during the period when most of it was written.

[21] Not all of these men were members of the Whig club (according to Hobhouse's list, Marchand, I, 140n), they weren't all present at Newstead, and they weren't all gay, but these things linked them to Byron and are relevant to the way in which they are imagined as an audience for his poem.

[22] Marchand, I, 174-76.

letters between Byron and Hobhouse, in Falmouth awaiting a passage to the Continent, and Matthews, in Cambridge. "My dear Mathieu," Byron wrote on 22 June 1809:

> I take up the pen which our friend has for a moment laid down merely to express a vain wish that you were with us in this delectable region, as I do not think Georgia itself can emulate in the capabilities or incitements to the 'Plen. and optabil. – Coit.' the port of Falmouth and parts adjacent. – – We are surrounded by Hyacinths & other flowers of the most fragrant [na]ture, & I have some intention of culling a handsome Bouquet to compare with the exotics we expect to meet in Asia. – One specimen I shall certainly carry off, but of this hereafter. – Adieu Mathieu! – –
>
> (BLJ I, 206-07)

The abbreviated Latin phrase, from a passage in Petronius' *Satyricon* describing the seduction of a young boy, was identified by Gilbert Highet and translated as "complete intercourse to one's heart's desire" (BLJ I, 207n). Matthews' response shows how much he enjoyed cracking Byron's codes and creating new ones of his own:

> In transmitting my dispatches to Hobhouse, mi carissime *βυρον* [Byron] I cannot refrain from addressing a few lines to yourself: chiefly to congratulate you on the splendid success of your first efforts in *the mysterious*, that style in which more is meant than meets the Eye. I shall have at you in that style before I fold up this sheet.
>
> Hobhouse too is uncommonly well, but I must recommend that he do not in future put a *dash* under his mysterious significances, such a practice would go near to letting the cat out of the bag, should the tabellarians [i.e. postmen] be inclined to peep: And I positively decree that every one who professes *ma methode* do spell the term wch designates his calling with an e at the end of it – *methodiste*, not method*ist*, and pronounce the word in the French fashion. Every one's taste must revolt at confounding ourselves with that sect of horrible, snivelling fanatics.[23]

The mysterious style holds the group together in shared and unwritten understandings encoded in a sophisticated and esoteric vocabulary of French, Greek and Latin terms. The code is a mark of distinction both because it displays their class and education and because their sexual

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[23] Charles Skinner Matthews to Byron, 30 June 1809. Cited in Louis Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in Nineteenth-Century England* (Swaffham: The Gay Men's Press, 1985), pp. 128-29.

identity marks them off and prevents them from being "confounded" with the common crowd. It's unclear whether Edleston was in on this game, but he and Byron had codes of their own, and Byron wrote at least one note to Edleston in cipher (BLJ XI, 173). After his death, Edleston would appear in the Thyrza poems as the most sustained and mysterious of Byron's codes.

Louis Crompton suggests that Byron's Cambridge circle shared a "gay identity" reinforced by these codes.[24] This description risks overstatement and anachronism, but if not a shared identity, these letters do reveal a set of shared sexual interests and a coded exchange of sexual stories. These exchanges take place in a semi-public sphere, where postmen may peep at letters, and the methodistes delight in smuggling hidden meanings past the prying eyes of the world. Amending Crompton's claim, Jerome Christensen asserts that "this bit of correspondence describes the deliberate formation of a *literary* sense of identity".[25] At a basic level, the number of Byron's circle who counted authorship among their avocations confirms this collective literary identity. Francis Hodgson published his novel *Sir Edgar* in 1810, and John Galt was then circulating his Greek poem 'The Fair Shepherdess' ("appears to be damned nonsense", concluded Byron (BLJ II, 22)).[26] Hobhouse was writing a book about his travels, and the poor sales of his *Miscellany* are a constant topic of Byron's letters at this time.[27] He wrote to Edward Ellice:

> I do exhort you and all your acquaintance who may be possessed of a dormant half-guinea to purchase [the miscellany], and he himself (when he is worth so much money) will in return buy rhyme at the same rate from any of the said persons who shall please to be poetical.
>
> (BLJ I, 255)

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[24] Ibid. p. 129.
[25] Jerome Christensen, *Lord Byron's Strength: Romantic Writing and Commercial Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 60.
[26] Francis Hodgson, *Sir Edgar* (London: J. Mackinlay, 1810, repr. with an introduction by Donald Reiman, New York: Garland, 1977).
[27] John Cam Hobhouse, *Imitations and Translations from the Ancient and Modern Classics, Together with Original Poems Never Before Published* (London: Longman, 1809). This miscellany also included nine poems by Byron.

Byron was also planning to launch a journal to which they could all contribute, to be called *La Bagatelle* or *Lillabulero*. This scheme would bring the methodistes before the public as writers. The journal would not be a "common magazine or review" and they wouldn't need other contributors "if we set seriously about it".[28] The planned journal would distinguish Byron and his friends as men of discernment, "clubable persons with a sufficient tincture of literature" apart from the common herd (BLJ II, 49). Here, then, Byron was collaboratively creating a circle of literary men who were ready to lend a sympathetic ear to each other's writings and who were well accustomed to playfully coded homoerotic communications.

In the manuscripts of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* Louis Crompton identifies three points where Byron encoded meanings for these cognoscenti: in the characterisation of Harold's page, the stanzas on William Beckford and the mention of pederasty at the court of Ali Pasha.[29] The page addressed in 'Childe Harold's Good Night' was originally "a <guilty> henchman page / a <dark-eyed> peasant boy who <loved> served his master well" (CPW II, 10). The stanzas on Beckford were also revised, removing the line "<By one fair form> Gainst Nature's voice seduced to deed accurst". But although this explicit reference to Beckford's notorious homosexuality was cancelled, Byron left in the description of "wild flowers" which "breathe" around Beckford's now-deserted house (1. 22). This recalls the code words in Byron's Falmouth letter, where desirable boys are "Hyacinths & other flowers". The description of Ali Pasha's court originally included the lines "For boyish minions of unhallowed love / The shameless torch of wild desire is lit, / Caressed, preferred even to woman's self above" (CPW II, 63). But Byron cancelled these too after the deaths of Edleston and Matthews. There are three likely reasons for the suppressions. Firstly that Byron simply had second thoughts, perhaps after the Vere Street scandal in 1812, which whipped up English homophobia. Secondly that he

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[28] BLJ II, 43, 56. See also BLJ II, 33, 45-46.
[29] See Crompton, pp. 120-21, 130 on Beckford, p. 131 on the page, and p. 139 on Ali Pasha's court.

responded to the urging of Dallas and Murray to tone down elements of the poem that were likely to prove controversial. Thirdly, and most importantly for my argument here, that once the audience whom Byron hoped to titillate with these references could no longer read them, they became much easier to dispense with.

But these examples, I contend, are the textual trace of a primarily oral conception. While Byron was writing *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, he thought of the poem as the bare bones of the stories that he would tell *viva voce* when he was back in England. What could safely be written could then be embellished in different directions for different auditors: with urbane modesty for the folk of Southwell or racy detail for the methodistes. During the first year or so of *Childe Harold's* existence, when Byron was writing the poem on his travels but not writing about it in his letters, he repeatedly declined to give his correspondents the full story of his escapades, deferring the detail until they met on his return. Unlike Hobhouse, who was "scribbling" long letters and a book of travels with the "two gallons Japan Ink, and several vols best blank" that he had taken with him, Byron claimed to have "laid down [his] pen" (BLJ I, 208). Instead, he planned to "reserve all account of my adventures till we meet" (BLJ I, 235). Byron's letter to Hodgson from Lisbon exhibits this deferral motif:

> Thus far we have pursued our route, and seen all sorts of marvellous sights, palaces, convents, &c. – which, being to be heard in my friend Hobhouse's forthcoming Book of Travels, I shall not anticipate by smuggling any account whatsoever to you in a private and clandestine manner.
>
> (BLJ I, 215)

Here Byron set up the terms that would continue to govern his attitude towards accounts of his travels, including the poem that he was privately writing. Hobhouse is associated with writing, formality and absence, conscientiously and industriously recording his impressions and prudently investing them in a future book. Byron sets himself against this characterisation, associating himself here and elsewhere with speaking, friendship and presence, writing "you must be satisfied with simple detail till

my return, and then we will unfold the floodgates of Colloquoy [sic]" (BLJ I, 239). Unlike Hobhouse's responsible efforts to enhance his reputation with a travel book, Byron's account of his tour is figured as contraband. Although he defers them for now, he will smuggle clandestine stories back into England.

Once it transpired that Hobhouse would arrive home before Byron and get a head start on the storytelling, Byron dispatched letters to bolster his own claim to conversational authenticity. Hobhouse was "bursting with his travels", and Byron jokingly wrote to Henry Drury that:

> I shall not anticipate his narratives, but merely beg you not to believe one word he says, but reserve your ear for me, if you have any desire to be acquainted with the truth [...] *I* am to be referred to for authenticity; and I beg leave to contradict all those things whereon he lays particular stress. But, if he soars, at any time, into wit, I give you leave to applaud, because that is necessarily stolen from his fellow-pilgrim.
>
> (BLJ I, 240)

With Hobhouse back in England, Byron lost a restraining influence and gained a new correspondent. "Give my compliments to *Matthews*" he wrote, "I have a thousand anecdotes for him and you, but at present *Τί να καμω?* [*Τί να κανω?* = what to do?] I have neither time nor space, but in the words of Dawes, 'I have things in store'" (BLJ II, 10). From Patras he reiterated, "I am in possession of anecdotes that would amuse you and the Citoyen, but I must defer the detail till we meet" (BLJ II, 16). And he reminded Hobhouse again from Malta that "My fantastical adventures I reserve for you and Matthieu and a bottle of Champagne" (BLJ II, 46).[30] It is significant that all these promises of a commentary on his travels include Matthews, who wrote to Byron in eager anticipation of getting all the details:

> A thousand thanks for your letter, of which I had given up all hopes. Cam did me a great injustice when he said I was particular. Twould be the height of impudence in me, who am so indulgent towards myself. In one sense of the word, I would you were a little more

[30] "Citoyen" was another name for Matthews, suggesting his democratic politics. The inconsistent spelling of "Mat(t)hieu" is Byron's own.

> *particular*; that is to say, minute. In some of your passages I desiderate volumes of commentary. Not that there is any obscurity – the commentary I should require would be illustrative not explanatory.[31]

Given the deferral motif in Byron's correspondence, I suggest that he intended to supply an illustrative verbal commentary not only to his letters, but to some passages of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. His commentary would have embellished the coded homosexual references, and part of its pleasure would have come from the sense that his audience of cognoscenti had access to meanings denied to the public at large. By definition, we who are not initiates to that circle of erotic storytellers and codebreakers cannot claim to know which passages of *Childe Harold* Byron might have glossed, or what he might have said. But the notes, which allude frequently to Byron's travels, the Romaic materials appended to the poem, many of which were untranslated, and the mysterious Thyrza poems published in the same volume all seem to invite glosses and explanations from Byron.[32] These elements, when considered alongside the deferral motif in Byron's letters, suggest that *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* was designed to be supplemented, and in a sense completed, by a verbal commentary for a privileged audience to whom the poem would mean more, in different ways, than it did to the commercial readership.

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[31] Matthews to Byron 13 January 1811. Cited in Crompton, pp. 160-61. Although it seems unlikely that Byron was explicit in his letters, it is possible that the record is distorted because letters that clearly hinted at homosexual activities were destroyed. All the papers in Matthews' rooms at Cambridge were removed after his death, probably by solicitous friends concerned about their contents.

[32] On the materials that make up the book *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, and for a critique of their handling in CPW, see Roger Poole, 'What Constitutes, and What is External to, the "Real" *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, A Romaunt: and Other Poems* (1812)?' in *Lord Byron the European: Essays from the International Byron Society* ed. by Richard A. Cardwell (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1997) pp. 149-207. The facsimile of a Romaic letter contained a fawning and obsequious apology from the Bey of Corinth for not having extended his hospitality to the visiting English Lord as protocol required when Byron was stranded in Corinth by bad weather. The Bey's embarrassment could have been translated orally for the amusement of Byron's friends, but was concealed from the purchasing public. The first published translation of the letter appeared in 2001. See Petros Peteinaris, 'The Bey Apologises', *Newstead Abbey Byron Society Review*, (July 2000), 13-19 and Peter Cochran, 'The Bey Apologises (II)', *Newstead Abbey Byron Society Review*, (January 2001), 35-37.

Shortly after he arrived back in England, with the manuscript of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and the host of stories that would embellish it, Byron learnt of the deaths of his mother and of his school friend John Wingfield, of Charles Skinner Matthews and of John Edleston.[33] Byron was "almost desolate – left almost alone in the world" (BLJ II, 69). For want of anyone else to address, he apostrophised himself:

> For thee, who thus in too protracted song
> Hast sooth'd thine idlesse with inglorious lays,
> Soon shall thy voice be lost amid the throng
> Of louder minstrels in these later days:
> To such resign the strife for fading bays –
> Ill may such contest now the spirit move
> Which heeds nor keen reproach nor partial praise;
> Since cold each kinder heart that might approve,
> And none are left to please when none are left to love.
>
> (2. 94)

The public arena which Byron aimed at in the first stanza of Canto One ("the strife for fading bays") is here presented as a crowded and clamorous market, a "throng / Of louder minstrels". But the privileged private readership which he aimed at in the second stanza, the "kinder heart[s]", cannot provide an alternative audience whose approbation would be worth having, because "none are left to please when none are left to love". The loss of "the parent, friend, and now the more than friend" leaves Byron feeling unloved, unregarded and in a sense non-existent (2. 95). Uncertain of his audience, he is uncertain of his abilities, even his identity. "What is my being?" he asks, "thou hast ceased to be!" (2. 96). The deaths deform the teleological structure of the pilgrimage by making Byron figuratively homeless and therefore making homecoming impossible. He returns only "to find fresh cause to roam" (2. 95). Byron is left feeling bereft of the mediating audience that would have come between him and the potentially hostile public.[34]

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[33]Mrs Byron died at the beginning of August 1811, aged forty-six, after Byron had arrived in England but before he had seen her. On 3 August, Matthews was drowned while swimming in the Cam. By 10 August Byron had learnt of Wingfield's death. In October news reached him that Edleston had died in May. Marchand, I, 284-86, 295.

[34] The deaths of Matthews and Edleston do not at a stroke wipe out the audience of cognoscenti, but I suggest that they represent that audience for Byron more strongly than any other individuals, and therefore their deaths send his *sense* of the audience into crisis.

There is now no one between him and "the crowd", and he is left with no choice but "to plunge again into the crowd" (2. 97). The end of the poem presents Byron living on after the end, having prematurely reached "the worst of woes that wait on age" with his whole life still before him (2. 98).[35] When he turned back to revise the beginning of the poem, Byron faced the problem of trying to begin once he had arrived beyond the end. How was he to start speaking, when there was no one left to listen?

This trauma traumatised the poem. Byron added the final disconsolate stanzas of Canto Two and the first stanza of Canto One, with its implied public audience.[36] He also inserted an elegy for Wingfield and a tribute to Matthews in a note, where he writes "In the short space of one month, I have lost *her* who gave me being, and most of those who had made that being tolerable" (1. 92n). The deaths of Edleston and especially Matthews – the master cryptanalyst of methodisme – deprived Byron of the sense that an audience of friends would welcome his poem. Dallas remembered that "he felt himself ALONE. The town was now full; but in its concourse he had no intimates whom he esteemed, or wished to see."[37] Byron wrote "my friends are dead or estranged, and my existence a dreary void" (BLJ II, 92). Revising the poem for publication in this mood, Byron was placed against his will into an unmediated relation with the anonymous audience of the Romantic period. Alone in the crowd, and without any clear sense of who would read his poem, Byron grappled emotionally with the loss of his friends, and poetically with the loss of his audience. But in losing one audience, Byron discovered another, creating the apparently unmediated relationship between poet and reader that characterised the hermeneutic of intimacy. That apparently unmediated relationship was in fact mediated by the intervention of industrial publication methods, under the direction of John Murray.

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[35] On death and valediction at the end of Canto Two, see Paul Elledge, 'Chasms in Connections: Byron Ending (in) *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* 1 and 2', *English Literary History*, 62 (1995), 131-44.
[36] For a comprehensive account of the revisions, see the commentary in CPW II, 265-71.
[37] Dallas, pp. 196-97.

Dallas offered Murray *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* after Byron had declined to send it to Cawthorn, who had published *English Bards*, and Miller, having read the manuscript, had turned it down.[38] The fact that Byron rejected Cawthorn because "he did not then rank high among the brethren of the trade" suggests that he was keen to enhance his fame with the poem and that he thought of it as a decisive break with the conventions and audience of *English Bards*.[39] While Byron lacked any clear sense of who was going to buy the poem, Murray knew his market. Murray and Dallas agreed that Murray should print the first edition at his own expense, and that they would share any profits and only then arrange payment for the copyright, if the poem proved to be successful.[40] Murray produced the first edition of five hundred copies in quarto. The price was thirty shillings, making the book a luxury item. Murray spent the relatively small amount of £19 3s. 6d. on newspaper advertising, but since he was only committed to five hundred copies, he could afford to rely on word of mouth.[41] Murray's biographer notes that before the day of publication, "the publisher had already taken pains to spread abroad the merits of the poem."[42] The target audience for the first edition, then, was few in number but very rich and very fashionable. It was not a social group in which Byron felt comfortable at this time. Murray must have had his eye on possible future editions in cheaper formats, which would reach a much wider audience, but this would be a knock-on effect from the poem's niche-success with an elite group of trendsetters.[43] William St Clair puts it succinctly:

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[38] Marchand, 1, 281-82. Miller was Lord Elgin's publisher, and declined to publish a poem which criticised Elgin in such strong terms.
[39] Dallas, p. 119.
[40] Ibid. pp. 121-22. Murray would eventually pay Dallas £600 for the copyright.
[41] Doris Langley Moore, *Lord Byron: Accounts Rendered* (London: John Murrray, 1974), p. 180.
[42] Samuel Smiles, *A Publisher and His Friends: Memoir and Correspondence of the Late John Murray, with an account of the origin and progress of the house, 1768-1843*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1891), I, 210.
[43] Cf. McGann's summary of the effect: "Its publisher conceived its audience to be a wealthy one, people interested in travel books and topographical poems, people with a classical education with a taste for antiquarian lore and the philosophical musings of a young English lord. As it turned out, all of England and Europe were to be snared by his book's imaginations." Jerome J. McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 259.

> When the Duchess of Devonshire wrote that *Childe Harold* was "on every table", she meant on about 12½ per cent of the tables of the few thousand families who could afford 30 shillings or 50 shillings from their weekly budget.[44]

That Byron did not understand this plan to niche-market the poem and capitalise on its success with an elite audience by knock-on sales of cheaper editions, is clear from his comment "He wants to have it in quarto, which is a cursed unsaleable size; but it is pestilent long, and one must obey one's bookseller" (BLJ II, 113). In the process of writing *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, then, Byron imagined an audience of friends who would emotionally mediate between him and the anonymous and unpredictable Romantic period audience. He targeted these individuals with homosexual references which he planned to gloss verbally. In the process of publishing *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in several editions, on the other hand, John Murray identified an affluent and fashionable audience who would commercially mediate the poem's reception with a broader reading public.[45] He targeted this group by the price and format of the first edition and by word-of-mouth publicity.

After that mythic morning in March 1812 the first edition sold out in three days. "[T]he world [was] stark mad about *Childe Harold* and Byron" according to Samuel Rogers, and the Duchess of Devonshire wrote that Byron was "really the only topic almost of conversation".[46] Carriages blocked the street outside Byron's house bringing fashionable invitations.[47]

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[44] William St Clair, 'The Impact of Byron's Writings: An Evaluative Approach' in *Byron: Augustan and Romantic,* ed. by Andrew Rutherford (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 1-25 (p. 6). Thirty shillings is the price for the poem in wrappers, fifty shillings takes into account the cost of binding.

[45] This was the audience Robert Southey imagined would read *Madoc*, which was first published in quarto by Longman in 1805. He wrote in a letter "In fact, books are now so dear that they are becoming rather articles of fashionable furniture than anything else; they who buy them do not read them, and they who read them do not buy them. [...] If Madoc obtain any celebrity, its size and cost will recommend it among these gentry – *libros consumeri nati* – born to buy quartos and help the revenue." *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. by Charles Cuthbert Southey, 6 vols (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1849-50), II, 329-30.

[46] Cited in Marchand, I, 335.

[47] Marchand, I, 336.

Murray printed new editions of the poem in octavo immediately, and Byron's celebrity continued to grow.[48] But 10 March 1812, the publication date of the first edition, is not the end of the story. Byron returned to the poem in 1814, adding ten new stanzas to Canto Two and 'To Ianthe'; these first appeared in the seventh edition. At the height of his celebrity Byron returned once again to the beginning of the poem and added a lyric that identifies and idealises a specific reader. Whereas the first two stanzas of Canto One address a double audience, producing tensions between different modes, 'To Ianthe' locates an individual within the crowd of readers. The name "Ianthe" masks Lady Charlotte Harley, the eleven-year-old daughter of Byron's lover Lady Oxford. As an object of desire she is opposed to the boys of Byron's travels, and as a reader she is opposed to Edleston and Matthews. These differences suggest how Byron refigured the relationship between reader and writer once he became a celebrity. Writing his new-found readers into the poem, he cultivated the hermeneutic of intimacy.

'To Ianthe' begins with a flattering comparison. Implicitly, Byron's "straying" among the "matchless" beauties of the East may suggest that Ianthe is being distantly compared to the boys he encountered on his tour. But Ianthe outdoes the beauties of Byron's travels, and even of his fantasies:

> Not in those climes where I have late been straying,
> Though Beauty long hath there been matchless deem'd;
> Not in those visions to the heart displaying
> Forms which it sighs but to have only dream'd,
> Hath aught like thee in truth or fancy seem'd[.]
>
> (1-5)

Ianthe is described in Oriental terms; her eye is compared to the gazelle's (28) like Leila's in *The Giaour* (474), and she's dubbed "Young Peri of the West" (19). She is an Oriental beauty rediscovered at home, disproving Byron's previous strictures about the "paler dames" of England ("How poor their forms appear! how languid, wan and weak!" (1. 58)) and making

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[48] Three thousand copies of the second edition were printed, and this edition included six short poems in addition to those that appeared in the first edition. The poem went through four editions by the end of 1812, and ten by 1815.

possible the homecoming that was previously denied him.[49] Unlike the Greek boys, whose desirability was linked to the possibility that their attractions could later be communicated to the methodistes, Ianthe's beauty is said to be beyond the limits of language, incommunicable in its transcendence:

> Nor, having seen thee, shall I vainly seek
> To paint those charms which varied as they beam'd –
> To such as see thee not my words were weak;
> To those who gaze on thee what language could they speak?
>
> (6-9)

Ianthe's many charms won't stay still long enough to be painted, and they beggar Byron's words. This pose of hopeless inadequacy is a highly conventional one, marking the poem as a typical lyric in praise of a young girl. According to these conventions, the girl must be beautiful beyond description and supremely innocent and virtuous. The poet wishes she could always remain so, and her youth reminds him of his own mortality. The ease with which Byron can deploy the conventions indicates another reason why Ianthe displaces the Greek boys. She trumps the boys as a suitable object of desire for a celebrity poet because the representation of her beauty relies not on a clandestine conversation, but on a publishable poetic convention. Once Byron is fixed in a poetic career, he shifts his attention from a love that speaks its name only in private conversations or in codes, to one that writes its name in public verses with the support of a literary tradition.[50]

Ianthe is praised as an ideal reader in terms which distinguish her from Edleston, whom Byron had previously imagined as a complicit reader. She is young like Edleston, and the speaker pleads "Ah! may'st thou ever be what now thou art" (10). But whereas Edleston died young, Ianthe's youth is

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[49] Writing to Lady Melbourne, Byron made a joke about Charlotte Harley that combined an image of English domesticity with the Orientalist figure of the child-bride: "I am very busy educating my future wife" (BLJ III, 42).

[50] This is not to suggest that there was no tradition of homosexual writing, especially for the classically educated, but to acknowledge that a new poem which placed itself in that tradition would be necessarily *sub rosa*.

carefully linked to her longevity. She is "hourly brightening" and the speaker can "safely view [her] ripening beauties shine" because she will outlive him, and he "ne'er shall see them in decline" (16, 22, 23). Her youth also preserves the speaker from the pain of loving her, "'tis well for me / My years already doubly number thine" (19-20). Addressing Ianthe, then, Byron is doubly protected from the pain caused by the death of Edleston, whom she resembles. He claims not to desire her because her youth makes it impossible, and he's certain that she won't die, because her youth assures him of her longevity. These are both consoling fictions. Edleston taught Byron that age is no barrier to desire, and that youth is no guarantee of longevity. Where Byron initially looked to Edleston and Matthews to be especially privileged readers, he now looks to Ianthe, creating a fantasy in which she is immune from being cut off as they were, before reading the poem.

The terms in which her reading is imagined indicate why she is such a desirable reader. Having adopted the pose of being immune from desiring Ianthe, Byron is denied "that smile for which my breast might vainly sigh, / Could I to thee be ever more than friend" (32-33). Since Byron cannot have that smile for himself in the present, he solicits it for his poem in the future instead. Having figured Ianthe's smile as a modest metonym for sexual consent, the poem presents reading as the next best thing to sex. Ianthe reads with her seductively winning eye (30), bestowing on the poem the smile of assent she would give to a suitor, and since she is a particularly creative reader, reading becomes a generative act, drawing fresh music from Byron's "lyre" (42). Her "fairy fingers" trail over his book, in lieu of his body, bewitching both (42). Caroline Franklin describes the effect: "This powerfully intimate address to Ianthe, and through her his female reader, invites her to read the poem as a mode of relationship with him."[51] 'To Ianthe' fantasises that although *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* is sold to a faceless commercial audience, it is received by a single special reader, who accepts it as a billet

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[51] Caroline Franklin, 'Cosmopolitan Masculinity and the British Female Reader of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*' in Cardwell, pp. 105-25 (p. 116).

doux inviting her to a reading which is a kind of tryst. The commercial significance of this rhetoric is that Ianthe provides an enabling projection for a whole section of Byron's readership. Byron's female readers could imagine their own readings in the intimate terms in which Ianthe's was presented. Theirs are the "kinder eyes" which, unlike Ianthe's, are not too young to be desirable (38). The poem encodes a flirtatious doubleness. On one hand, Ianthe is praised from a distance in terms of chivalric chastity. On the other, the poem's purchasers are implicitly invited to participate now in the eroticised reading which in Ianthe's case is deferred until she comes of age.

The difference between how Byron imagined this reading and how he imagined that of the methodistes shows how he refigured his sense of audience when becoming a celebrity. Ianthe's reading is based not on knowing the code, but on the poem's allure, which "attract[s]" her, and on her own beauty, youth, innocence and virtue, which make her an ideal reader (42). Whereas the methodistes' reading was deferred until Byron could be present to add a verbal commentary, Ianthe's is deferred until her maturity and Byron's death. Since she is so young, her reading takes place "my days once number'd" (41). She is imagined reading about the "days" he has "number'd", that is to say versified, after his "days [are] number'd"; counted down to death. Her reading differs from that of the methodistes because instead of resulting from something Byron adds to the text from outside, an authorial supplement that modifies and completes the poem, it is produced by the extent to which he is embodied in or by the text, and by the idea that reading functions as a form of relationship with him. As such, the shift in Byron's sense of an audience that is signalled when Ianthe displaces Edleston and Matthews as a privileged reader marks a significant advantage for his creation of the textual erotics of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

The methodistes' pleasure, I have argued, would have used the poem as a starting point for the erotic retelling of past sexual encounters, saying what could not be written in order to conjure up acts done elsewhere and previously that could not (or not so easily) be done here and now. The

pleasure of Ianthe's eroticised reading, by contrast, lies in the action of reading the poem and the access it provides to a seductive but absent Byron. This reading does not recreate a sexual act from another place and time, it substitutes for one that happens only in fantasy – but happens again with each rereading and every new poem. As such, the pleasure of Ianthe's reading is not limited to cognoscenti, but is available to anyone who can spare the price of the poem. The difference between the methodistes and Ianthe is the difference between keeping the commercial readership at bay with privileged mediating individuals and trying to shape that readership's response by presenting it with an exemplary figure. 'To Ianthe', "first beheld, forgotten last" presents an image of reading in which all female readers can invest (40). Both the commercial viability of this image (it can be sold to anyone) and its suggestion that reading places the reader in intimate contact with the poet, define Byron's celebrity. Celebrity requires that a relationship between the celebrity and his audience be created which sustains the appearance of being intimate and special, but which is also indefinitely marketable. When Byron started writing *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in 1809, he tried to protect himself from the anonymous and potentially hostile commercial readership of the Romantic period by addressing a select group of friends. When he returned to the poem in 1814 to add 'To Ianthe', he seduced that commercial audience by constructing the hermeneutic of intimacy, inviting them to imagine reading as a meeting of intimates and turn a blind eye to the industry which produced, distributed and sold the poem endlessly.

THE GIAOUR: SCOPOPHILIA AND SOMATIC INSCRIPTION

After *Childe Harold's* dazzling success all eyes were on Byron. The upper echelons of Regency society welcomed him into their drawing rooms and showered him with invitations to balls and dinners, not to mention trysts and assignations. The poet who had made the inaccessible lands of Spain and Portugal, Greece and Albania visible to his readers, was now made visible himself. Mysteriously silent and brooding at dinner parties, stilled at balls by his lameness, shown off by his finely made dark clothes, Byron was the object of many an inquisitive, admiring or curious gaze. The sudden arrival of celebrity, with its attendant visits, plays, dinners and intrigues, may have come as something of a social shock to the young man who had been most at home either in the clubbable all-male drinking parties of his Cambridge days or the unbuttoned ambience of his first foreign tour. But Byron's occasional stiffness and formality in company only encouraged the impression that his socialising was display; he was to be looked at from a distance as much as interacted with. And Byron was looking back, with a seductive "*under* look", which made Lady Mildmay's heart "beat so violently that she could hardly answer him."[1] Four years later, in Rome, Lady Liddell would warn her daughter, "Don't look at him, he is dangerous to look at."[2] Looking, as those two ladies realised, brought both pleasures and dangers. Byron's celebrity made him highly visible, and in his Turkish Tales he wrote about the excitement and the burden of looking and being looked at.

The Giaour is the first significant poem Byron published after he became a celebrity. In writing it, he faced the challenge of consolidating his position in Romantic print culture, sustaining the attention he had received and proving that his fame was not a flash in the pan. Recent criticism, in a move away from the nineteenth century tendency to read the Oriental tales as camouflaged autobiography (and its twentieth century descendant, which reads them as the manifestation of psychoanalytic symptoms), has viewed Byron's tales in the context of British imperialism, or as allegories of

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[1] Lady Mildmay reported by Thomas Moore, Marchand, I, 330.
[2] Marchand, II, 692.

domestic politics.[3] While these frames have recovered lost significance in the poems, they do not explain the tales' importance in Byron's evolving public profile. In this chapter I investigate how Byron's celebrity flowered when he stimulated his audience's interest, not simply in reading his poems, but in looking at his person. I argue that Byron used the fragmentary form and multiple editions of *The Giaour* to arouse his readers' desire to possess the story completely. Since its fragments could never provide narrative closure, and it was understood to depend on a biographical incident, the text alone could not satisfy this desire. Instead, readers' desire overflowed the poem and fixed on the poet as its object. He suggested that the missing narrative information that would enable the poem's complete possession could be obtained by scrutinising the bodies of his characters and, by extrapolation, fostered a scopophilic fascination with his own body. That body was not a natural given, the a priori ground of Byron's celebrity, but was "constructed" by diets and dandyism, portraits and prints. Byron's celebrity placed him in an array of gazes and desires which he actively propagated, but which he could not hope to control.

As his tangled erotic involvements suggest, Byron became implicated in networks of desire every time he wrote or spoke, every time he appeared in public, every time his portrait was taken, his hair clipped for a locket, or his image reproduced. This chapter examines how those desires shaped and were shaped by Byron's poetry and its commercial marketing. I share Thomas Lacqueur's aim, to "bring together two domains [...] that are usually considered as altogether distinctive: the sexual desires of the body and the

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[3] For a psychoanalytic reading, see Peter Manning, *Byron and his Fictions* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978). For political contexts, see Daniel P. Watkins, *Social Relations in Byron's Eastern Tales* (Rutherford NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1987), Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 13-67, Marilyn Butler, 'The Orientalism of Byron's *Giaour*,' in *Byron and the Limits of Fiction*, ed. by Bernard Beatty and Vincent Newey (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1988), pp. 78-96 and Caroline Franklin, '"Some Samples of the Finest Orientalism": Byronic Philhellenism and Proto-Zionism at the Time of the Congress of Vienna,' in *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire*, ed. by Tim Fulford and Peter Kitson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 221-42.

economic desires of men and women as consumers in the market place."[4] The astounding success of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* signalled Byron's entry into a market ridden with desires: a libidinal economy. Jean-François Lyotard's term spotlights the apparently unreasonable libidinous drives of individuals in society, which orthodox Marxism overlooks.[5] Geoffrey Bennington explains Lyotard's aim "to show intensities lodged in theory, to demonstrate that the cold serious discourse of political economy is also a set-up of libidinal economy."[6] He continues:

> The problem is not that of locating a place where desire flows (even a "marginal" place) but of showing that desire flows even where Marx and even Baudrillard recognise only alienation and repression. If desire is not to be opposed to capitalism, it can be recognised *in* capitalism.[7]

Although he made no personal financial profit, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* brought Byron commercial success and celebrity, creating the hermeneutic of intimacy that he was keen to capitalise on when he published his tales. *The Giaour* is Byron's and Murray's attempt to turn the remarkable singularity of *Childe Harold* into a sequence, a reliable income stream for the publisher and fuel for the poet's fame.[8] Their success relies on capital and

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[4] Thomas W. Lacqueur, 'Sexual Desire and the Market Economy During the Industrial Revolution' in *Discourses of Sexuality: From Aristotle to Aids*, ed. by Domna C. Stanton (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 185-215 (p. 187). Lacqueur is responding, to some extent, to Henry Abelove's essay 'Some Speculations on the History of Sexual Intercourse During the Long Eighteenth Century in England', *Genders*, 6 (Fall 1989), 125-30.

[5] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, trans. by Iain Hamilton Grant (London: The Athlone Press, 1993). "One of Lyotard's major objections to Marxism," according to the *Icon Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*, "is that it fails to allow any place for these drives within its theories, seeing them as irrational and unpredictable, and therefore to be resisted. For Lyotard, however, the denial of libidinal drives in this way is an authoritarian act, and one that ultimately can only be unsuccessful: the drives will always find some means of expression and cannot be suppressed indefinitely." *The Icon Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*, ed. by Stuart Sim (Cambridge: Icon Books, 1997), p. 347.

[6] Geoffrey Bennington, *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 34-35. The word "set-up" translates Lyotard's *dispositif*, more often rendered as "apparatus".

[7] Ibid. p. 39.

[8] If, as Jerome Christensen asserts, Byronism thrives on sequential repetition, triumphing commercially by endlessly reproducing Byron, then *The Giaour*, as the first volume after *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and the text which inaugurates the Byronic series, is the crucial text with which to begin analysing the configurations of desire in Byron's readership and his attempts to respond to them. See Christensen, *Lord Byron's Strength*, pp. 5-10, and his comment that "*The Giaour* is the harbinger of a new form of subjectivity that, according to Baudrillard, 'triumphs in the mechanical repetition of itself.'" (p. 114).

libidinal economies overlapping. The tale speculated on the libidinal economy in order to elaborate further the hermeneutic of intimacy. Where *Childe Harold* had figured reading as a potentially eroticised relationship between reader and poet, *The Giaour* extended that relationship from reading to looking. Directing the reader's scopophilic gaze to Byron's socially spectacular body enabled a whole secondary industry that, by producing likenesses of Byron and illustrations to his poems, added a visual dimension to his celebrity.

Reading *The Giaour* made people want to look at Byron. The poem aroused curiosity about the poet, interest in Byron's physical appearance, and a specifically scopophilic kind of desire. The desire that *The Giaour* provoked and channelled towards its author took its pleasure in looking; gazing at him or, if he were not available in person, at his likeness in portraits, prints and young men who affected Byronic styles. This desire began in the ingenious folds of *The Giaour's* narrative, and was propagated and directed by the poem's fragmentary form and its emergence over multiple editions as Byron added new lines. Finding itself unsatisfied at the text's conclusion, as narrative desire somehow always does, it moved beyond the poem and found its object in Byron himself. That transfer required readers to elide the poem, the hero and the poet – a slippage that Byron subtly fostered. Such scopophilic desire was made possible by Byron's appearance in London society at this time, by his status as a spectacle, and by the social composition of his audience, many of whom had a real chance of glimpsing him during the balls and parties of the London season. Those who couldn't see him in the flesh had access to prints and illustrations that encouraged them to identify Byron with his heroes. But although Byron was content to be spectacular on his own terms, he couldn't control how he was seen. Entering the network of desires inevitably compromised Byron's agency, his control over how he was perceived by the public. The desires he aroused in *The Giaour* would not be easily policed.

I consider desire never as dyadic or asocial, never confined to a complementary or specular relation of subject to object, but always mediated

and entangled in overdetermined socio-historic contexts. The desire I speak of here is not reciprocal, self-completing love, but seems doomed to be always deviated, interfaced, refracted, triangular.[9] Something or someone is always interposing, interceding or interrupting. Seeking to manipulate his readers' desires, Byron tried to establish his poem as a relay of desire, a conduit to channel their attention back to the poet. But his strategies for seducing the reader involved him in a libidinal economy in which his agency was severely circumscribed. To desire or be desired is to become a node in a network of desires, an agent in a field of intersecting forces which shape and are shaped by the individual desiring subjects in that field. To enter such a web of desires is therefore to compromise one's autonomy in potentially unsettling ways. Desire, it seems, never confines itself to one object, one person, one explanation, but overflows its bounds, circulating among subjects in ways that no one can claim fully to control but with which everyone must compromise.[10]

Narratives thrive on desire. Telling stories driven by the desires of their characters, narratives arouse desire in the reader to get to the end, to find out what happens, to get the whole story. Desire propels us toward an anticipated, longed-for denouement, when all our questions will be answered. "Narratives both tell of desire" writes Peter Brooks, "and make use of desire as dynamic of signification."[11] Of course, we don't want to get straight to the end, and we luxuriate in narrative obstacles, but the end is

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[9] Several schools of thought in critical and psychoanalytic theory testify that simply dyadic desire is impossible. For a Lacanian psychoanalytic tradition, desire is founded on an originary lack, crucial to the subject's constitution and associated with the formative traumas of weaning, the "mirror stage" and entry into the "symbolic order". Object desire, in this school of thought, metonymically displaces the primal desire to return to a pre-subjective state – a desire which can never be satisfied, because the desiring subject would dissolve in its fulfilment. A second strand of thought, which Judith Butler locates in the writing of René Girard, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Miekkel Borsch-Jacobsen, holds that desire always emerges from and is structured by rivalry, and triangulates itself around the vertices of subject, object and rival. Here desire for the object is always somehow desire for the rival who mediates between the desiring subject and the object of desire. See Judith Butler, 'Desire' in *Critical Terms for Literary Study,* ed. by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 369-86 (p. 383).

[10] The critic who desires to speak of desire must also compromise, as Judith Butler indicates when she asserts that "language is bound up with desire in such a way that no exposition of desire can escape becoming implicated in that which it seeks to clarify." Butler, 'Desire', p. 369.

[11] Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 37.

always comfortably just out of sight, somewhere between the bookmark and the back cover. Yet the desire for more of the story, the desire to lose ourselves in narrative, is also the desire for the story to end, a hunger for narrative closure. Identifying "the paradox of narrative plot as the reader consumes it," Brooks presents narrative desire "diminishing as it realises itself, leading to an end that is the consummation (as well as the consumption) of its sense-making."[12] Narrative desire seems always to remain after the end of the story, and never to be fully satisfied by the ending. Narratives generate desires that they themselves cannot satiate, as J. Hillis Miller suggests:

> It could be that we always need more stories because in *some* way they do *not* satisfy. Stories, however perfectly conceived and powerfully written, however moving, do not accomplish successfully their allotted function. Each story and each repetition or variation of it leaves some uncertainty or contains some loose end unravelling its effect, according to an implacable law that is not so much psychological or social as linguistic.[13]

The Giaour left plenty of loose ends, disrupting the sense of an ending that drives more conventionally linear narratives, and leaving its readers' desires in search of an extra-textual object.

Avoiding a linear exposition of its plot, *The Giaour* shuffles its fragments and forces the reader to pick his or her way across them like stepping-stones.[14] It seems to be singularly inefficient at arousing our desire to get to the end, as Marjorie Levinson recognises:

> *The Giaour* collects and interprets its material in an extremely circular way that seems finally unproductive of any insight at all. Byron's "snake of a poem" is an *ourobouros*.[15]

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[12] Ibid. p. 52.
[13] J. Hillis Miller, 'Narrative' in Lentricchia and McLaughlin, pp. 66-79 (p. 72).
[14] David Seed has analysed some of the effects of the fragment form in '"Disjointed Fragments": Concealment and Revelation in *The Giaour*,' *The Byron Journal*, 18 (1990), 14-27. For an argument that aims to connect the fragment form to issues of gender and imperialism, see Joseph Lew, 'The Necessary Orientalist? *The Giaour* and Nineteenth-Century Imperialist Misogyny,' in *Romanticism, Race and Imperial Culture*, ed. by Alan Richardson and Sonia Hofkosh (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 173-202.
[15] Marjorie Levinson, *The Romantic Fragment Poem: A Critique of a Form* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), pp. 124-25.

The poem does not channel narrative desire toward a denouement containing all the answers, but turns it back on itself. Although the *Quarterly Review* was troubled by the poem's "abrupt and capricious transitions" (RR V, 2006), Francis Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review* praised the "fragments thus served up by a *restaurateur* of such taste as Lord Byron", saying that "the greater part of polite readers would now no more think of sitting down to a whole Epic, than to a whole ox" (RR II, 842). The fragment form opens up in an unusually literal fashion narrative gaps or blanks of the sort identified by Wolfgang Iser, which stimulate the reader's curiosity, desire for knowledge, and active response to the text.[16] The reader is invited into the text to join in the author's meaning-making by filling the gaps. But in *The Giaour's* case, the reader's interventions after the poem's first appearance could only be temporary postulates, because new editions kept appearing with additions which filled in some of the gaps while creating more blanks of their own.

Deprived of a linear plot with the clear sense of an ending, the reader's desire to get to the end is displaced by a desire to get the whole story, to reconstruct the tale and fully possess the poem. Byron's reference in the Advertisement to "the story, when entire" suggests an ur-narrative which a sufficiently imaginative or perspicacious reader could discern behind the "disjointed fragments". The fragment form and the frequency of new editions turned Byron's accretive compositional practice into a strategy for arousing and sustaining readers' desire to possess the poem completely. Complete possession meant both materially owning the latest expensive edition from Murray to display on one's table, and imaginatively possessing the fullest possible details of the poem's plot and characters from those bits of text that did not appear at first. The title pages of the early editions

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[16] "Communication in literature, then, is a process set in motion and regulated, not by a given code, but by a mutually restrictive and magnifying interaction between the explicit and the implicit, between revelation and concealment. What is concealed spurs the reader into action, but this action is also controlled by what is revealed; the explicit in its turn is transformed when the implicit has been brought to light. Whenever the reader bridges the gaps, communication begins." Wolfgang Iser, 'Interaction Between Text and Reader' in *Readers and Reading,* ed. by Andrew Bennett (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 20-31 (p. 24).

announced continually enhanced versions of the poem. The second edition declared itself to be "a new edition, with some additions." This was followed by the "Third Edition / with considerable additions", which emphasised its length by adding the marginal line numbers that would appear in all subsequent editions. The fourth edition was also "with additions" and the fifth "with considerable additions". The sixth edition had no additions, and the seventh and eighth had "some additions", after which the text stabilised, running to fourteen editions in all, and selling 13,500 copies by 1819.[17] These additions serially embellished the original version of 684 lines (itself expanded from a proof of 453 lines) to the received 1334 lines, without ever providing all the information that the reader desires. The fragment form makes complete possession impossible, because no matter how many fragments are added, they cannot add up to the whole story. To fill all the gaps would require the poem to be recast into a linear narrative – which would make it a different poem altogether. *The Giaour* will never provide its readers with all the answers they desire. As a result of these strategies, the publisher made a profit, the poet gained in celebrity and the readers were treated to the excitement of a protracted engagement with the narrative, an extended arousal of narrative desire that always left room to want more.

It was not only formal factors that made complete possession impossible. It was widely believed that the tale had a concealed origin in something that had happened to Byron while he was abroad. Until the link with Lord Byron's life was made explicit, the reader's desire to possess the whole story could not be satiated. By turning to that story here, I aim not to repeat Romantic biographical readings, but to uncover the Byronic strategy from which those readings took their cue. Briefly, when Byron was in Athens in 1811 he was apparently returning from bathing one day when he came across a procession bearing a young woman sewn up in a sack. She was to have been drowned for infidelity, as Leila is in the tale. Byron intervened, drawing his pistols, and forced the party to return to the Governor of Athens,

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[17] Sales figures from St Clair, p. 9. Details of the title pages are from early editions of *The Giaour* in the British Library.

where, by a mixture of threats and bribery, he secured the girl's release, on condition that she left Athens. Byron arranged for her safe passage to Thebes. Caroline Lamb put this story about, or something like it, in London in 1813.[18] There was also talk of it in Athens at the time, as Lady Hester Stanhope, who was there, remembered when she wrote in her *Memoirs* that Byron was "a sort of Don Quixote, fighting with the police for a woman of the town."[19] Rumour had it that Byron had been the girl's lover, and was indirectly the cause of the sentence. Thomas Medwin, John Galt and Hobhouse clouded this issue after Byron's death. Medwin and Galt (possibly following Medwin) confirmed the rumour, but Hobhouse, reviewing Medwin's *Conversations of Lord Byron* in the *Westminster Review* in 1825, prudently claimed that "the girl whose life lord Byron saved at Athens, was not the object of his lordship's attachment – but that of his lordship's Turkish servant."[20]

Byron arranged for Lord Sligo, who had arrived in Athens just after Byron left, to provide a letter stating the story as he had heard it. Byron circulated this letter among his acquaintance in 1813, with ten lines inked out so heavily as to have torn the paper – another tantalising narrative gap.[21] He intended to include the letter, as the "official" version of events, in a note to the fifth or seventh edition (CPW III, 424). But he never did. His vacillation reveals his complex repertoire of strategies for producing and sustaining his audience's curiosity about him, even under the guise of doing something quite different. By claiming that, "it is not requisite for me to subjoin either assent or contradiction", Byron submitted in evidence, as it were, a second-hand report of second-hand gossip (BLJ XI, 186). For his

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[18] Marchand, I, 409.
[19] Cited in Marchand, I, 259.
[20] Ibid. I, 258n.
[21] Benita Eisler, in support of her speculation that Byron invented the whole incident, inaccurately claims that the MS is dated October 1811, and implies that the letter was written then, before *The Giaour*. Benita Eisler, *Byron: Child of Passion, Fool of Fame* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1999), pp. 275-6. The manuscript is in the Murray archive, and is only dated "Albany Monday" (the watermark is undated), furthermore Byron has written on the letter "August 31st 1813 received by B^{n}". Byron wrote to Thomas Ashe on 14 December 1813, "I did not know till last summer that [Sligo] knew anything of the matter" (BLJ III, 200). The key portion of this letter is in CPW III, 414.

circle, this went some way towards revealing the incident and its connection to the poem, and it would have done the same for a wider readership had it been published. But by allowing Sligo to speak in his place, Byron only went far enough to arouse, not to satiate the desire for the whole story. Byron himself, who could have given the definitive account, refused "either assent or contradiction" and therefore perpetuated the uncertainty.[22]

The letter was never printed. The note that was printed makes no mention of the incident, but asserts Byron's faulty memory as the reason for the fragment form:

> The story in the text is one told of a young Venetian many years ago, and now nearly forgotten. – I heard it by accident recited by one of the coffee-house story-tellers who abound in the Levant, and sing or recite their narratives. – The additions and interpolations by the translator will be easily distinguished from the rest by the want of Eastern imagery; and I regret that my memory has retained so few fragments of the original.
>
> (1334n)

Concealed somewhere in Byron's mind, the note seems to imply, are the definitive answers to the text's mysteries, the information to fill its lacunae, and the truth about the link to Lord Byron's life. *The Giaour* conceals both the whole truth about the story it tells, and the adventurer Byron, with his pistols, his Athenian mistress and his scrapes with the Turks. Only Byron himself has the answers. Only he could speak from a position of authority outside or behind the poem, which, until the eighth edition at least, it is always possible that he will do. Whilst the narrative of *The Giaour* creates desires, it also establishes Byron as the only person who can satisfy those desires. Only he could fill in the gaps in the story, and only he could explain the truth about the biographical incident that was understood to underlie it in a peculiarly private way. *The Giaour* seduced its readers by suggesting that Byron might at some point in its serial elaboration enable them fully to

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[22] Byron's reasons for this manoeuvre are, of course, unclear. He may have been reluctant to discuss the incident, as he wrote in his journal, "to describe the *feelings* of *that situation* were impossible – it is *icy* even to recollect them" (BLJ III, 230). At the same time, by the time of the fifth edition he may have felt it unnecessary to stir up any more interest in the connection.

possess the story, and his own story, by a complete revelation of the elements that it had so far concealed. Peter Brooks asserts that narratives aim "to seduce and to subjugate the listener, to implicate him in the thrust of a desire that never can quite speak its name – never can quite come to the point – but that insists on speaking over and over again its movement toward that name."[23] For *The Giaour*, that name – the name to conjure with – is "Byron".

But if the poem cannot achieve the desired narrative closure, then the reader reaches an impasse, condemned to desire that with which he or she can never be presented. How are readers to get the answers they want from Byron if he won't step forward and explain? The poem suggests a way out. At the same time as it tantalisingly conceals details in its fragment form and shadowy relation to Byron's life, *The Giaour* suggests that crucial details can be gleaned by looking at bodies, especially the Giaour's body and face. The poem suggests that its narrative answers can be found inscribed on bodies, where they can be read by close observers. It is this factor that makes the desire that the poem arouses specifically scopophilic; a desire to look at Byron's characters, and at Byron himself.

The Giaour frequently refers to the eyes of its readers, speakers and characters. The "Muse" of Greece, remembering her past heroes, "points [...] to stranger's eye / the graves of those that cannot die" (134-35) and when the Giaour makes his first appearance, we strain our eyes to catch sight of him, as the speaker asks, "Who thundering comes on blackest steed?" (180). The Giaour, glimpsed in flight at full tilt, mesmerises the spectator: "On – on he hastened – and he drew / My gaze of wonder as he flew" (200-01). He pauses in his headlong gallop to gaze back at Hassan's domains, fixing them in his mind's eye (217-21), while the poem's notes emphasise that Byron has also looked at this landscape and suggest that his

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[23] Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, p. 61

authority stems from his status as an eye-witness.[24] The looking eye is the definitive attribute of the living: the dead are recognised by its absence. A corpse has "that sad shrouded eye, / That fires not – wins not – weeps not – now" (79). The poem employs conventional Orientalist motifs of the hypnotic or imprecatory gaze. The Giaour's "evil eye" is mesmeric, and "oft will his glance the gazer rue" (837), and Hassan's eye glares "with fiercer fire" (594). The poem is all eyes: eyewitnesses are central to its plot, and visual tropes are crucial to its rhetorical effects.

The reader's gaze is directed to the faces, eyes and bodies of Leila and the Giaour. Leila's eye convinces the narrator that, contrary to received belief, she has a soul:

> But Soul beamed forth in every spark
> That darted from beneath the lid,
> Bright as the jewel of Giamshid.
> Yea, *Soul*, and should our prophet say
> That form was nought but breathing clay,
> By Alla! I would answer nay;
> [...]
> Oh! who young Leila's glance could read
> And keep that portion of his creed
> Which saith, that woman is but dust,
> A soulless toy for tyrant's lust?
>
> (477-90)

This section (473-518) shows Byron's skilful manipulation of Orientalist visual pleasure in the poem, interrupting the narrative to exhibit the central female character to the reader's gaze. Leila's appearance, in Laura Mulvey's cinematic terms, is "coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that [she] can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness."[25] Although *The Giaour* mimics to some extent the qualities of oral poetry, claiming to imitate Levantine "coffee-house story-tellers" who "sing or recite their narratives"

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[24] E.g. 89n where Byron suggests that he has seen the corpse of someone recently stabbed to death, which he uses as an image for Greece, and 1077n, where he dwells on his journeys through bandit country, accompanied by armed guards.

[25] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen,* 16.3 (1975), 6-18 reprinted in *Feminisms: an Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism,* ed. by Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p. 442. The transaction is complicated in this instance, since the male gaze which is directed at Leila produces an idea

(1334n), it requires the reader to gaze intently at the pictures it projects in his or her mind's eye. Its effects are visual as much as aural. Leila's "glance" can be "read", and is loaded with erotic soulfulness; "on her might Muftis gaze, and own / That through her eye the Immortal shone" (491-92).

While Leila's body is exhibited in a narrative hiatus, the hero's body is inscribed with narrative meanings, the concealed information that propels the story, stoking the reader's narrative desire.[26] It is presented as a site of possible narrative answers from his first appearance:

> I know thee not, I loathe thy race,
> But in thy lineaments I trace
> What time shall strengthen, not efface;
> Though young and pale, that sallow front
> Is scath'd by fiery passion's brunt,
> Though bent on earth thine evil eye
> As meteor-like thou glidest by,
> Right well I view, and deem thee one
> Whom Othman's sons should slay or shun.
>
> (191-99)

Although he doesn't know the Giaour, the speaker can "trace" meanings in his "lineaments". His character is "scath'd" indelibly onto his face, which in turn "impressed / A troubled memory on my breast" (204-05). Similarly, the Giaour's "fearful brow" (231) reveals his changing emotions:

> He stood – some dread was on his face –
> Soon Hatred settled in its place –
> It rose not with the reddening flush
> Of transient Anger's hasty blush,
> But pale as marble o'er the tomb,
> Whose ghastly whiteness aids its gloom.
>
> (234-39)

– that she has a soul – which subverts the Islamic patriarchy that this structure of looking might seem to support.

[26] Once again, Screen theory is relevant to Byron's gendered presentation of the body. Kenneth MacKinnon asserts that, in action films, "the hero's body is [...] a site of concern within a narrative [...] rather than [...] an object of erotic contemplation (although, secretly, it may be that too)." Kenneth MacKinnon, 'After Mulvey: Male Erotic Objectification,' in *The Body's Perilous Pleasures: Dangerous Desires and Contemporary Culture*, ed. by Michele Aaron (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 13-29 (pp. 14-15).

Here the speaker can discern the nature and quality of the Giaour's innermost emotions by scrutinising his face. The external attribute of colour is eloquent of the unspoken emotions which it signifies.

Peter Brooks's more recent book, *Body Work*, inflects his previous insights in the direction of the body in narrative. He writes:

> I want to talk mainly about bodies emblazoned with meaning within the field of desire, desire that is originally and always, with whatever sublimations, sexual, but also by extension the desire to know: the body as an "epistemophilic" project. The desire to know is constructed from sexual desire and curiosity. My subject is the nexus of desire, the body, the drive to know, and narrative: those stories we tell about the body in the effort to know and to have it, which result in making the body a site of signification – the place for the inscription of stories – and itself a signifier, a prime agent in narrative plot and meaning.[27]

In the same year that this was published, Maud Ellman described "the body" as "the latest shibboleth of literary theory":

> Particularly west of the Rockies, where essays on the body are churned out of PCs with the same demonic rigor that the bodies of their authors are submitted to the tortures of the gym. Indeed, the theorization of the body has become the academic version of the "workout".[28]

In spite of these strictures, bodies in *The Giaour* are, quite literally, unignorable. Whether it is Leila's body, writhing as it sinks in its sack, or the Giaour's, whose "dilating eye / Reveals too much of times gone by" (834-35), they demand to be looked at and to reveal information.

The Giaour is marked by his past crime in such a way that it cannot be concealed, as French convicts were branded until 1832[29] or as is the inmate in Kafka's story *In The Penal Colony*, whose crime is engraved into his flesh. In his confession the Giaour says:

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[27] Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 5-6.
[28] Maud Ellman, *The Hunger Artists: Starving, Writing and Imprisonment* (London: Virago, 1993), p. 3.
[29] Brooks, *Body Work*, p. 25.

> She died – I dare not tell thee how,
> But look – 'tis written on my brow!
> There read of Cain the curse and crime,
> In characters unworn by time[.]
>
> (1056-59)

Unable to speak his guilt, the Giaour offers his face to the monk to be read, in the certainty that it will accurately reveal his secret. If we scrutinise the chiaroscuro of the Giaour's body, we are promised a revelation both of his remorse and of his aristocratic nature:

> But sadder were it still to trace
> What once were feelings in that face –
> Time hath not yet the features fixed,
> But brighter traits with evil mixed –
> And there are hues not always faded,
> Which speak a mind not all degraded
> Even by the crimes through which it waded –
> The common crowd but see the gloom
> Of wayward deeds – and fitting doom –
> The close observer can espy
> A noble soul, and lineage high.
>
> (859-69)

Although the Giaour's face betrays only the ruins of emotion, "what once were feelings", the story of his past crimes is there if we would only look. The face is still sufficiently alive to tell its story, and its appearance "speaks" of the mind concealed within. The speaker here invites us to scrutinise the face he conjures into our imagination; to be the "close observer" who can see the Giaour's noble soul. By scrutinising the Giaour's body, we can know his history, the poem suggests, embodying Brooks's assertion:

> An aesthetics of narrative embodiment insists that the body is only apparently lacking in meaning, that it can be semiotically retrieved. Along with the semioticization of the body goes what we might call the somatization of story: the implicit claim that the body is a key sign in narrative and a central nexus of narrative meanings.[30]

The Giaour bears narrative meanings on his face, and elsewhere on his body, for instance in his long hair, which encodes his difference from the monks, his (Medusa-like) corruption and (Samson-like) strength (898-900).

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[30] Ibid.

While the fragment form of the text leaves unanswered questions, the poem also suggests that those answers might be found on the bodies of its characters, and that if our desire for narrative answers – always already in some sense sexual – were directed, with our gaze, at those bodies, it might be satisfied. The body in the narrative reveals to the reader's gaze what is otherwise left unsaid.

Once Byron was identified as somehow lurking behind his protagonist, this invitation to gaze at the Giaour could be recognised as an invitation to gaze at Byron himself. By the curious transference that made so many of the poem's first readers certain that Byron had drawn himself in the Giaour, desire for the answers that the Giaour's body would provide became desire for Byron himself, Byron in the flesh. Although his crimes are revealed on his body, the Giaour conceals Byron beneath his skin, and the link to the biographical incident, so carefully stage-managed with Sligo's assistance, strengthened the identification. What is more, many of the poem's readers were in fact in a position to gaze on Byron, or at least glimpse him, since they belonged to the upper echelons of Regency society, in which Byron moved at this time. William St Clair has estimated that twenty percent of *The Giaour's* sales were to families with an income of over £200 per annum, an income which he identifies as a benchmark of "gentility" based on examples drawn from Navy pensions.[31] *The Giaour's* early editions were luxury items, and large numbers of them sold to people whose social geographies might intersect with Byron's, at the time when he was drawn into fashionable society as a celebrity who added lustre and often intrigue to any gathering.[32]

From the records of those readers who gazed on Byron, it is possible to recover a discourse that paralleled the poem's interest in the semantics of

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[31] St Clair, p. 4 and table 1.5 on p. 6.

[32] Copies of *The Giaour* in wrappers sold for 5 ½ shillings, to which the cost of binding would normally be added (a volume of several tales cost 22s in wrappers, 32s bound). This was a good deal cheaper than the octavo edition of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (12s in wrappers, 25s bound) but still well beyond the reach of the men who printed these books, who were paid 36s a week. Carpenters were paid about 25s a week, and the "gentility" by St Clair's definition had incomes of about 100s a week. St Clair, table 1.2 on p. 3, p. 4.

the somatic, but directed attention to the poet in place of his hero. One reader who took the chance to scrutinise Byron in society was Annabella Milbanke, who saw him for the first time on 25 March 1812 at a morning visit to Melbourne House. *The Giaour* had not yet been written, but she had read *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* over the previous three days.[33] Annabella didn't seek an introduction, but observed Byron from a safe distance. In her diary that night, she wrote:

> His mouth continually betrays the acrimony of his spirit. I should judge him sincere and independent – sincere at least in society as far as he can be, whilst dissimulating the violence of his scorn. He very often hides his mouth with his hand while speaking. [...] It appeared to me that he tried to control his natural sarcasm and vehemence as much as he could, in order not to offend; but at times his lips thickened with disdain, and his eyes rolled impatiently. Indeed the scene was calculated to shew human absurdities.[34]

Byron's face, like the Giaour's, displays his innermost nature, but only to the close observer. Annabella was convinced that, by scrutinising his face, she had discovered "the acrimony of his spirit", which less careful observers had overlooked, "continually betray[ed]" by his features. Characteristically, she also made this a moral judgement – she claimed to have seen what the people speaking to Byron were too preoccupied and shallow to notice. Byron's emotions leave physiological traces which Annabella reads in his lips and eyes, determined to be the "close observer" that readers of *The Giaour* are invited to be. Much later, after they separated, Byron would charge her with having failed at that task, having been a careless reader of his body:

> Would that breast, by thee glanced over,
> Every inmost thought could show!
> Then thou would'st at last discover
> 'Twas not well to spurn it so.
>
> ('Fare Thee Well' 9-12)

Here Byron seems unsure how much information the body can bear, but in any case, Annabella has only "glanced over" him, and not read thoroughly.

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[33] Marchand, I, 332
[34] Cited in Marchand, I, 333.

Both husband and wife participated in a discourse that figured Byron's body as a site of inscription where fascinating information was to be found.

It was not only his future wife who responded visually to Byron. Coleridge remembered his teeth as "so many stationary smiles" and his eyes as "open portals of the sun". His forehead, Coleridge continued, was "so ample, and yet so flexible, passing from marble smoothness into a hundred wreaths and lines and dimples correspondent to the feelings and sentiments he is uttering."[35] Likewise, seventeen-year-old Isabel Harvey, who wrote to Byron under the pseudonym Zorina Stanley after he left England and who had no chance of seeing him in the flesh, nonetheless felt that looking was an important part of knowing and understanding him. She sent him her picture, and acquired a print of Byron "which I talk to every day", turning Byron from poet into pin-up.[36] "I should like you to fancy me a friend" she wrote, "one you have known and seen":

> In Mr. Haydon's picture of the Raising of Lazarus there is a head he thinks like you. I have been 20 times to see it. They think I am absorbed in admiration of the picture, but it is only one head that engrosses my mind's eye.[37]

Reading his poems made people want to look at Byron, in the conviction that the sight of him would in some way provide answers, solve mysteries or reveal secrets. His readers imagined Byron's body in the same way as he imagined the Giaour's – as a surface on which traces of hidden subjective depth were inscribed. Whether they endorsed Coleridge's conviction that appearance was "correspondent" to emotion, or shared Zorina Stanley's belief in the connection of seeing and knowing, they understood Byron's subjectivity to be structured around a hidden interior that nonetheless made itself legible to close observers on the surface of his face and body.

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[35] Cited in Marchand, II, 597. Where Annabella – believing Byron to be irritated by the women who surrounded him "trying to *deserve* the lash of his satire" (Marchand, I, 333) – thought his face betrayed his attempts to dissimulate, Coleridge thought Byron's face underscored his speech, and expressed his feelings ingenuously.
[36] Paston and Quennel, p. 264.
[37] Ibid. p. 262.

Readers passed from reading his books to reading his face with remarkable ease.

Portraits fostered this visual response to Byron, engravings brought the poet's face to a wider audience, and illustrations which made Byron's heroes look like him cashed in on his visual familiarity. Byron had several portraits and miniatures painted soon after his rise to fame, and expressed concern about how they circulated in engravings.[38] He often exchanged miniature portraits with lovers, creating an eroticised economy of representations. Caroline Lamb acquired at least three miniatures at different times, as well as making her own drawings.[39] Byron recovered one of his pictures from her for Lady Oxford, whose portrait he also had painted and sent "carefully *packed* and *out of sight*" to Murray's.[40] Caroline gave up another picture, which Byron gave to Frances Wedderburn Webster, and she left a third in her will.[41] These pictures circulated among the women in Byron's life along pathways shot through with desire. Frances Webster grasped the miniature's metonymic status, and resolved to keep her picture come what might. She wrote to Byron that he must never ask for the picture back – not even for his wife.[42] If she couldn't possess the man himself, she was determined to hang on to his likeness.

The emotional investments that these women made in Byron's miniatures were simply intensified local examples of a scopophilic response to the celebrity poet that was being repeated all over Britain and beyond.

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[38] On Byron's relationship with his portraits, see, for example, Suzanne K. Hyman, 'Contemporary Portraits of Byron' in *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries: Essays from the Sixth International Byron Seminar*, ed. by Charles E. Robinson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1982), pp. 204-36, Christine Kenyon Jones, 'Fantasy and Transfiguration: Byron and his Portraits' in *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Culture*, ed. by Frances Wilson (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 109-36, Annette Peach, 'Byron and Romantic Portrayal,' in *Lord Byron: A Multidisciplinary Open Forum*, ed. by Thérèse Tessier (Paris: The Byron Society, 1999), pp. 193-203 and David Piper, *The Image of the Poet: British Poets and their Portraits* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 91-145. A complete catalogue of Byron's *ad vivum* portraits is now available: Annette Peach, 'Portraits of Byron,' *The Walpole Society*, 62 (2000), 1-144.

[39] One, possibly of Byron and his wife, is reproduced in Paston and Quennell, facing p. 68.

[40] Marchand, I, 380.

[41] Ibid. I, 423; III, 1261n.

[42] Paston and Quennell, p. 100.

"Believe me," wrote his publisher, "your portrait is engraved & painted & sold in every town throughout the Kingdom."[43] And John Gibson Lockhart comically claimed that "every boarding-school in the empire [...] contains many devout believers in the amazing misery of the black-haired, high-browed, blue-eyed, bare-throated, Lord Byron. How melancholy [he] look[s] in the prints!"[44] Despite the foundation of the Royal Academy in 1768, and the British Institution for Promoting Fine Arts in 1805, opportunities for viewing paintings in the Romantic period were still limited.[45] Prints, however, were widely available, and were displayed in printshop windows. This made the printseller's wares visible to passers-by of all social stations, and window-shopping first became a recognisable pleasure in this period.[46] Caroline Lamb responded to a print from Thomas Phillips's "cloak" portrait with infatuated infuriation:

> I marvel how a man who attends so minutely to every button and tassell should not study the hand more – and the ear: In all England I know but of two that have ears similar – and that eye [...] expresses every feeling the young Corsair has not – such as ill-humour, obstinacy, industry, instead of fire, genius, craft, spirit and incessant variety.[47]

Caroline subjected the print to the scopophilic scrutiny typical of the eroticised visual response to Byron that I am tracing. She conflates the poet with his heroes, and then expects his portrait to reveal his character (which is also theirs) in his eyes. She seems sure that his eyes, when seen in reality, do indeed reveal his spirit. When Zorina Stanley scrutinised her print of Byron, she participated in a new cultural activity made possible by advances in print technology. Deirdre Lynch asserts that, "As a result of the enhancement in technologies of copying, the replica is scrutinised with a new thoroughness, because it is now necessary to check out the particulars

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[43] Murray to Byron, 19 March 1819, *The Works of Lord Byron: Letters and Journals*, ed. by Rowland E. Prothero, 5 vols (London: John Murray, 1898-1904), IV (1900), 283.
[44] Cited in Redpath, p. 277.
[45] C. Suzanne Matheson writes that "a number of private galleries in London and the provinces could be viewed upon application to their proprietors, but access was not easily obtained by members of the general public." C. Suzanne Matheson, 'Viewing' in McCalman, pp. 187-98 (p. 190).
[46] See Roy Porter, 'Consumerism' in McCalman, pp. 181-86 (p. 182). Porter quotes a German visitor to London in the 1780s, who remarked on the window displays.
[47] Cited in Paston and Quennell, p. 65.

in which it manages or fails to be strictly faithful to the original."[48] The printmaking industry was quick to capitalise on the visual response to Byron that his poem promoted, turning his celebrity to its own profit.

Byron's image, as well as his writing, was gaining in publicity, but the body which was thus reproduced and floated on the market was itself Byron's production and when, in *The Giaour*, he obliquely directed attention towards it, it was only after careful preparation. Apparently a natural pre-textual entity, inscribed with traces of an authentic interior subjectivity, Byron's body was in fact a rigorously artful production. Since his Cambridge days Byron had been dieting, and his attempts to control his weight should be understood as central to his celebrity strategies of self-presentation. We have detailed information about Byron's weight between January 1806 and July 1811 from a ledger in the archives of Berry Brothers and Rudd, a vintner in St. James Street. The customers of Messrs Berry, as they then were, enjoyed weighing themselves on the set of scales in the shop, and their weights were regularly noted in ledgers from 1765. The ledgers record the weight of many notable characters, including Charles James Fox, Beau Brummell and Thomas Moore.[49] Byron was first weighed on 4 January 1806, and his weight recorded as 13 stone 12 pounds. By the autumn of 1806 his weight had increased to 14 stone 6 pounds: very overweight for a man of 5 feet 8½ inches, especially if we consider that he may have avoided the scales when his weight exceeded this level.[50] Over the next five years he was weighed on Berry's scales seven times, remaining around 11 stone. The last two entries in the Berry ledger, however, tell a more interesting story. On 10 June 1809, he was 11 stone 5¾, slightly overweight, but when he returned from his travels two years later, he was only 9 stone 11½: 22 lb lighter than when he left, and four and a half stone below his heaviest recorded weight.[51]

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[48] Deirdre Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 48.
[49] See H. Warner Allen, *Number Three Saint James's Street: A History of Berry's the Wine Merchants* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1950), p. 87, on the ledgers; pp. 101-04, on Fox; pp. 137-38 on Brummell; p. 149 on Moore and pp. 149-54 on Byron.
[50] Marchand, I,125.
[51] Marchand, I, 125n.

This weight loss seems to have been the result of a regime which Byron had started as early as 1807, when he wrote to Hanson:

> I have lost 18 LB in my weight, that is one stone and four pounds since January [...] as I found myself too plump [...] my clothes have been taken in nearly *half a yard*.
>
> (BLJ I, 114)

This initial attempt took him to just under eleven stone that summer, where he stayed for a while, before the second and more extreme diet of 1809-11. We know he bought a treatise on corpulence in 1811, and perhaps it helped him to maintain his low weight, which he did, with considerable effort, and with one or two lapses, for several years.[52] In November 1811, he dined with Samuel Rogers, asking for hard biscuits and soda water. Since these were not available, he dined on potatoes, which he mashed up and drenched in vinegar.[53] In September 1812 he wrote to Murray from Cheltenham to enquire when "the graven image" of his portrait would be ready "to grace or disgrace some of our tardy editions," and in the same letter instructed his publisher to "send [him] Adair on Diet and regimen."[54] When Byron saw the frontispiece engraving which was intended for the fifth edition of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, he strongly objected to it, and made Murray destroy it.[55] In October 1812, a doctor advised him to eat more, especially more meat.[56] Byron's relationship to food, and his body image, seem to have been troubled for most of his life.

Losing twenty-two pounds between 1809 and 1811 seems to have been a preparation for his launch into public life. Byron's dieting produced a body which he conceived as fit for the kind of public figure he intended to become, a body ready to be seen in the House of Lords, in Holland House,

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[52] Jeremy Hugh Baron, 'Byron's Appetites, James Joyce's Gut, and Melba's Meals and Mésalliances,' *British Medical Journal,* 315, no. 7123 (1997), 1697-703 (p. 1698). The treatise was probably *Cursory Remarks on Corpulence* by William Wadd (1810), according to Baron.
[53] Marchand, I, 304. Baron, p. 1698.
[54] BLJ II, 191. The book by Adair (James MacKittrick) is identified by Marchand as *An Essay on Diet and Regimen* (1804). It was reprinted in 1812.
[55] BLJ II, 224-25, 228, 234.
[56] Marchand, I, 362n.

and by his readers.[57] *The Giaour*, which he began writing shortly before his embargo on the frontispiece engraving for *Childe Harold*, contributes to Byron's status as a spectacle, by directing attention to the spectacular body that he has produced by an effort of will. Byron's physical appearance, whether in portraits, dandified clothes or in the flesh, was an aesthetic production: his art was also body art. While *The Giaour* generated interest in looking at Byron, Byron produced his own body so that it would stand up to the scrutiny he invited. Resisting consumption himself with his strict diets, Byron seeks to make his body fit for aesthetic/sexual consumption. Readers shifted their libidinous gaze between the corpus of his poetry and his body, looking for a promised revelation of his whole person.

Eager to profit from his new-found celebrity and visibility, and the spectacular new possibilities that the success of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* opened to him, Byron set out in *The Giaour* to attract his readers' attention. To encourage his audience to look twice he turned the poem into a relay of desire, a lens through which his readers' gazes and desires could pass, centring, finally, on the poet himself. Byron's appearance in society, his representation in portraits and the distribution of his image in prints underwrote this strategy, enabling a discourse that constructed Byron's body as a locus of signification for interior subjective realities. Byron's body came to be understood as the authentic register, legible to the perceptive observer, of hidden inward depths – the canvas of his soul. That idea placed Byron more fully than ever before in a libidinal economy, a network of gazes and desires structured by the relations of an industry and an audience. Once Byron's celebrity gained a visual dimension, a whole new industry of artists and engravers, printmakers and book illustrators, proprietors of print shops and publishing houses could turn his celebrity into

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[57] The theory that Byron dieted in preparation for public life is supported by contemporary reports which suggest that he put on weight between 1818 and 1822, while abroad and out of the public gaze. Leigh Hunt described him in June 1822 as "metamorphosed, round-looking and jacketed" (Marchand, III, 1006-7). But from June to September 1822 he again dieted drastically until Medwin observed in September that he had "starved himself into an unnatural thinness" (ibid. III, 1029). This was the period of Shelley's death and Byron's decision to go to Greece. He had ordered the Homeric helmets in June, and was determined to cut a heroic (and therefore slim) figure in front of the Greeks.

their profit. And a wider group of readers could enjoy consuming their products through new media. Infatuated adolescents and aspiring dandies, magazine subscribers and grangerising collectors, patrons of the panorama and diorama, devotees of the spectacular theatre – all these Romantic period viewers could now consume the circulating images of the celebrity poet. But the desires that Byron aroused and the gazes he solicited were not so tractable as he might have wished. As soon as the poet was perceived he felt misperceived, as his control over how he was seen slipped away. In *The Bride of Abydos*, his next major poem, Byron went on to represent some of the dangers of being caught in the public gaze, along with an increasingly politicised understanding of looking, in which the gaze would be seen not only as a passage of desire, but also as a vector of power.

Lord Byron

Engraved by T. Blood for the European Magazine from an original Painting by R. Westall, Esq.re R.A.

London. Published by J. Asperne 32 Cornhill 1st. February. 1814.

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: THE PERILS OF VISIBILITY

In *The Bride of Abydos*, as in *The Giaour*, looking can arouse desires and produce pleasures. But in this tale looking more often arouses resentment and produces dangers. Selim and Zuleika, the cousins whose love is thwarted by Zuleika's murderous father Giaffir, gaze longingly at one another. Their love thrives on exchanging furtive glances or gazing into each other's eyes. While Selim "gazed [...] through the lattice grate" (1. 255), "to him Zuleika's eye was turned" (1. 257). Looking for him to reciprocate her gaze and confirm their mutual devotion, she "watch'd his eye", but "it still was fixed" (1. 268). When Selim comes out of his reverie, "the soul of that eye" flashes "through the long lashes round it" and their gazes can finally meet (1. 338-39). The lovers' eyes express their attachment and their unblinking constancy. Zuleika pledges to "do all but close thy dying eye", as though not even death could break their mutual gaze (1. 404). Their love affair is a lattice of interlocking glances, longing to meet and be reciprocated.

But looking in this poem also brings dangers with it. Leander is invoked at the start of Canto 2 because he was blinded by love:

> He could not see, he would not hear,
> Or sound or sign foreboding fear;
> His eye but saw that light of love,
> The only star it hail'd above[.]
>
> (2. 12-15)

Dazzled by Hero's light at the centre of his infatuated tunnel vision, Leander swam to a watery death that Selim's death echoes. Wading in the shallows, Selim is shot down by Giaffir's fatally accurate eye when he looks back for Zuleika:

> Ah! Wherefore did he turn to look
> For her his eye but sought in vain?
> That pause, that fatal gaze he took,
> Hath doom'd his death, or fix'd his chain.
>
> (2. 563-66)

A misplaced gaze in this poem can be fatal, laying Selim open to the all too effective gaze that Giaffir directs down the sights of his musket, closing Selim's eyes for ever. Zuleika's eye, meanwhile, "was closed – / Yea – closed before his own!" (2. 619-20). *The Bride of Abydos* is concerned with the dangers of looking and the downsides of being looked at. It recognises and represents more fully than does *The Giaour* the nexus of looking, power and personal freedom, suggesting that the gazes of desire are not exempt from the movements of power along sight lines.

In this chapter I set in apposition three texts from 1813-14: *The Bride of Abydos*, the portrait engraving of Byron by Thomas Blood published in the *European Magazine*, and the journal that Byron wrote that winter. Produced the year after Byron awoke to find himself famous, these texts show him waking up to the constraints his fame placed on him. The gazes he had solicited in *The Giaour* were no longer so welcome, and Byron became concerned with trying to stay out of the public eye. He wrote his concern in his poem, performed it in his life and recorded it in his journal. In Byron's writings from this period, in the middle of the so-called Years of Fame, scopophilia shades into surveillance. I examine the structures of looking represented in *The Bride of Abydos* and show that representation to be more pessimistic and politically concerned than that seen in *The Giaour*. These structures of looking, shaping who looks at what and how, are always at some level power structures, hierarchies of the gaze. They are a central support for Giaffir's hegemony, constraining personal freedom, constructing dissidence and constricting dissent. Byron registers in *The Bride of Abydos* that the gaze of others can be coercive, limiting the autonomy of the individual's self-presentation.

Byron engineered Selim and Zuleika's escape from this oppressive surveillance, by making them retreat to the paradoxically liberating confinement of their cave. He then enacted himself the escape that he had imagined, withdrawing from Regency society at the height of his celebrity and confining his writing to a private journal. That retreat helped to consolidate a selfhood whose integrity the coercive gaze of others had

threatened. Thomas Blood's engraving provides an example of the kind of cultural practice that accompanied Byron's celebrity, compromised his autonomy and complicated his understanding of visual culture. When artists like Blood began to intervene in Byron's bodily strategies of self-presentation, he suffered a crisis of control. His response was obsessively to assert control over his social intercourse and food intake. He attempted to withdraw from his celebrity, rejecting what he called "the ephemeral *éclât* and fête-ing, buzzing and party-ing compliments of the well-dressed multitude" (BLJ III, 230). But Byron failed to heed the warning sounded in his own poem. Although Selim and Zuleika find temporary freedom in their liberating confinement, he warns that their response risks solipsism and produces a damagingly autistic autarky. The subjectivity that it consolidates makes sense only in its own terms, and cannot relate to the wider world. Retreating to his new rooms in The Albany, Byron courted the kind of solipsism that had figuratively killed off the hero of his most recent poem. This episode in Byron's career should unsettle the received characterisation of this period as the years when Byron enjoyed his fame, at the cost of his poetry.

Control over looking is systemic in Giaffir's regime, and deeply inscribed in Islamic society as the poem represents it. Zuleika affirms that "To meet the gaze of strangers' eyes / Our law, our creed, our God denies" (1. 429-30). Giaffir paranoiacally controls who can look at whom, and who is watched by whom, in an effort to secure his power. He has "Slaves, tools, accomplices – no friends" (2. 332), living in a society of universal mistrust, beset by deception, power struggles and fear. In this regime the harem is, in the poem's Orientalist imagination, an important way of structuring looking to support power. Neither quite a prison nor quite a refuge, the harem keeps the women away from prying eyes while preventing them from looking out and returning the gaze of a seducer. The "massy doors" (1. 240) of its architecture are reinforced by the surveillance of the guards "who watch the women's tower" (1. 80). More than an architectural structure, the harem is a power structure based on controlling looking, a blind spot which renders women literally and figuratively invisible, and a Foucauldian institution

supporting the power of the tyrant who can call them into his sight at any moment.[1] Because the Kislar and his Moors so carefully oversee them, the women can be overlooked in all matters of social importance. "All that thy sex hath need to know" Giaffir tells Zuleika, is "thy father's will" (1. 216, 215). The veil extends the harem's jurisdiction beyond its walls, structuring looking without the corresponding physical structure. Women who cannot be seen clearly and cannot freely look are denied agency by the surveillance of others. The women of the harem are subject to a Foucauldian panopticism, which enforces discipline by submitting its subjects to a constant and inescapable surveillance.[2] No transgression passes unobserved. The gaze of power in this disciplinary technology coerces the subjects' bodies into docility, quashing insurgence. Giaffir's command of his womenfolk is maintained, as in the panopticon, by dictating the terms of concealment and visibility. The women are carefully watched by their guards in order to make sure they are not watched by anyone else. "Woe to the head whose eye beheld / My child Zuleika's face unveil'd!" (1. 38-39).

Giaffir's gaze constructs Selim's effeminacy whilst it controls Zuleika's looks. The screen round the harem – part notional, part physical – can only be penetrated at the cost of castration, whether literal for the eunuchs who traditionally attend on the women, or figural for Selim, who is emasculated by his association with the harem.[3] The fact that Selim can command the harem's (phallic) "grating key" mocks his supposed lack of virility, as he passes in and out of the harem without appearing as a threat to its women (1. 67). "Vain were a father's hope to see / Aught that beseems a man in

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[1] It should go without saying that this is a misrepresentation of the harem's place in Islamic culture. Leslie P. Peirce describes it as "a space to which general access is forbidden or controlled and in which the presence of certain individuals or certain modes of behaviour are forbidden. [...] The word *harem* is a term of respect, redolent of religious purity and honour, and evocative of the requisite obeisance." Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 4-5. Joseph Lew argues that "Western empires, in reducing or fetishizing 'harem' as merely a collection of female bodies, facilitated the symbolic representation of [...] empire building. What endangered polities [...] might experience as dismemberment could [thus] be seen, through Western eyes, as 'liberation'". Lew, p. 192.

[2] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991), esp. pp. 195-230.

[3] In fact the poem does not specifically mention eunuchs, although the Nubian Haroun does not seem to be considered a potential seducer, possibly because of his age or his dark skin.

thee" taunts Giaffir (1. 83-84). But Giaffir's look, which claims to discover Selim's effeminacy, in fact coercively creates it. Giaffir's powerful gaze splinters Selim's body into a substandard assemblage of arms, eyes and hands, and reads these shards as effeminate. Having excluded Selim from "the game of mimic slaughter" that Giaffir plays with his henchmen (1. 247), he taunts him with claims that he would rather lounge about in the garden "when thine arm should bend the bow, / And hurl the dart, and curb the steed" (1. 85-88). Selim's arm is surveyed and found wanting: "his arm is little worth" (1. 135). His eyes and hands likewise fail to meet Giaffir's standards of masculinity:

> Would that yon orb, whose matin glow
> Thy listless eyes so much admire,
> Would lend thee something of his fire!
> [...]
> Go – let thy less than woman's hand
> Assume the distaff – not the brand.
>
> (1. 90-92, 99-100)

Listing the failings of Selim's "listless" body, Giaffir enforces a standard of masculinity based on his claim that the body is inscribed with signs of the individual's value.

In Giaffir's regime the body and its performances signify all personal worth for men. The attributes of the manly body, such as strength, martial skill and horsemanship, must be proved by display in battle or competition. What isn't demonstrated as masculine must be feminine, femininity being conceived as non-male, as lacking male attributes, and therefore of extremely limited worth. Giaffir excludes Selim from the theatre of "mimic war", the arena where masculine roles are played out, and so underwrites his powerful misreading of Selim's body (1. 450). He says to Selim, "I mark thee – and I know thee too" (1. 120). Marking Selim cuts two ways: Giaffir keeps him under surveillance, scrutinising him for signs of rebellion, and tries to coerce the rebellion out of him, marking him down as effeminate, weak and worthless, as if with a label or a brand. Looking in Giaffir's regime confines, constricts and coerces individuals, limiting their freedom.

When he wrote *The Bride of Abydos*, Byron was a spectacular individual. The Regency loved spectacle, as the Prince Regent's elaborate redecoration of Carlton House, the *chinoiseries* at Brighton Pavilion and the pagoda erected in St James Park for the "Grand Jubilee" of 1814 attest. In the fireworks at the climax of that event, the Chinese pagoda caught fire and fell burning into the lake – to appreciative cheers from the crowd, who thought it was all part of the show.[4] Celebrities were another kind of spectacle, as Rousseau indicated when he complained of meeting:

> People who had no taste for literature, who even for the most part had never read my writings, and who did not fail, according to what they said, to have travelled thirty, forty, sixty, a hundred leagues to come to see and admire the famous, celebrated, very celebrated man, the great man etc.[5]

Rich, glamorous, privileged and gazed upon, celebrities shine out from the centre of a structure of looking, apparently gathering power to themselves by their iconic visibility. At first glance, the panopticon appears to model celebrity structures of looking, with the celebrity occupying the privileged position of the tower, in the centre of the vision-structure, gazed on by a mass audience. But we should be cautious about this parallel. Celebrity, like the panopticon, "is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad", but celebrity reverses the panopticon's one-way gaze.[6] The single point at the centre, the celebrity's image, can always be seen, but he or she cannot see those who gaze on it. Celebrity made Byron a spectacular individual, but those who gazed on him were concealed from his sight by the new anonymity of the Romantic cultural marketplace. So although the celebrity stands at the centre of a structure of looking, he is not the power-centre, and the gazes directed at him, even in adulation, may constrain him.

Thomas Blood's engraving shows this constraint in action. The *European Magazine* was founded in 1782 and published monthly by James

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[4] All these spectacles are described in Venetia Murray, *High Society in the Regency Period: 1788-1830* (London: Penguin, 1999).
[5] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover NH: University Press of New England, 1995), V, *The Confessions*, ed. by Roger D. Masters, Christopher Kelly and Peter G. Stillman, trans. by Christopher Kelly, p. 511.
[6] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 201-2.

Asperne "at the Bible, Crown and Constitution", an address which indicated its moderate Whig allegiance. Donald Reiman writes that the magazine was "in the eighteenth-century tradition", and that "there was often very little editorial direction to the contents of these general magazines, for they aimed at entertaining a wide variety of literate readers, not at shaping the opinions of a particular ideological group" (RR II, 956). From its first number the magazine included a portrait of some celebrity or worthy, together with a short biographical note. The portraits were usually engraved by Thomas Blood, and were often of aristocrats, including European royalty. Byron appeared in the January 1814 issue, which came out at the beginning of February.[7] Later in 1814 Edmund Kean and Robert Southey were also to appear.[8] The unsigned biographical note on Byron began:

> Every one who possesses, or can borrow, the volumes of the Peerage, already knows, or may know, the genealogy of the family of Byron.[9]

As this opening sentence suggests, the note was mostly taken from the Peerage, and included few details about Byron that would not have been widely known already. About two-thirds of the note traces the Byron name through history from William the Conqueror before mentioning that Byron went to Harrow and Cambridge, and declining to "enter upon a detailed review of Lord Byron's works". It concludes:

> [O]ur chief object [is] to add to our very extensive collection of portraits, that of a poet who, at so early a period of life, has obtained the laurel for which he so devoutly prayed in sight of Parnassus itself.[10]

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[7] This image was reproduced on its own after it appeared in the *European Magazine*, and circulated widely. It was copied by David Edwin for the *Analectic Magazine*, 4 (July 1814), making this the first American engraved image of Byron. See Peter X. Accardo, 'Byron in America to 1830,' *Harvard Library Bulletin*, n.s. 9, no. 2 (1998), 5-60 (esp. pp. 10-11).
[8] For a complete listing of portraits in the *European Magazine*, see Edward Solly, 'Indexes of Portraits in the "European Magazine", "London Magazine" and "Register of the Times"' in *Report of the First Annual Meeting of the Index Society* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1879), pp. 73-95.
[9] Anon., 'Lord Byron', *European Magazine and London Review*, 65, no. 2 (January 1814), 2-4 (p. 3). A letter from Dallas to Byron dated 2 December 1813 in the Murray archives contains the postscript "I have sent Mr Asperne a note to say I shall write a short Memoir for the European Magazine." This suggests that Dallas may be the author of the biographical sketch. The style of the sketch, however, suggests otherwise.
[10] Ibid. p. 4.

Although the writer claims no special knowledge of Byron, this is probably one of the earliest bits of Byronic biography, sketching in his personal history for readers of his poems and implicitly legitimating a hermeneutic link between the two. That fact, and the image itself, make this an interesting contribution to Byron's celebrity.

Blood's engraving sheds light on a previously mysterious letter of Byron's. On 14 December 1813 Byron wrote to an unidentified man, whose name and address Leslie Marchand transcribes as "J. Asham Esqre. Cornhill":

> Sir / – I regret very much that I have not time for the purpose of sitting to Mr. D. of whose talents I think very highly. – Mr. Westall's objection seems to me very strange – but there *are 2* also at Mr. Phillips's from either of these or from Mr. Westall's the engraving you require can be obtained but it is not in my power to devote the proper time to Mr. D. at present & I should regret very much that his talents should be thrown away on a restless & impatient subject – as a *hurried* sitter must naturally be. – I cannot but be sorry for the trouble you are taking on so trifling an occasion – but remember it was not *my* seeking though I must feel obliged by your anxiety – & certainly wish to relieve it. –
>
> yr. obliged & obedt. Sert.
> B
> (BLJ III, 198)

Asham's identity was further clouded when Richard Walker, in his *Regency Portraits*, in turn mistranscribed Marchand's transcription as "Ashaw".[11] Mr. D. is also unidentified, although Marchand suggests painters called Dawe, Devis, Drew and Dance as possibilities. When the engraving is taken into account, it is clear that "J. Asham" is James Asperne, editor of the *European Magazine*, whose offices were at 32 Cornhill.[12] This identification is endorsed by the manuscript, which shows that Byron's "p", as in "impatient", does have a distinctive ascender, and that the descender of the "p" in

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[11] Richard Walker, *Regency Portraits*, 2 vols (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1985), I, 82.
[12] Asperne is also the addressee, unidentified by Marchand, of an earlier letter, dated 20 November 1813 (BLJ XI, 187).

"Asperne" is almost non-existent, making it easy to take it for an "h".[13] Mr. D. is Samuel Drummond (1765-1844), who painted a number of portraits for the *European Magazine* around this time, including the one of Kean. Drummond was a popular artist, and between 1790 and 1844 he exhibited 303 pictures and drawings at the Royal Academy. He was elected an associate of the Academy in 1808. Asperne wanted Byron to sit for Samuel Drummond so that the *European Magazine* could publish an original portrait of Byron, which Thomas Blood would engrave for the issue that came out six weeks later.

Byron, too busy to sit for Drummond, suggested that Asperne get an engraving of one of the portraits in the studios of Westall or Phillips. Westall had apparently already been approached about this, and had objected. He explained, in a letter to Byron of 11 January 1814, his "repugnance to seeing the work with which I have taken considerable pains, engraved in any other than the best manner."[14] He may also have objected to having the portrait engraved before he had exhibited it.[15] Apparently operating without Westall's consent, Blood's engraving takes Byron's head from his 1813 portrait and bolts it onto a completely different body. He turned Westall's richly coloured oil painting into a black and white stipple engraving, which allowed almost endless reproduction. In the process he moved Byron's body from its three-quarter turn into a frontal view, filling the frame. Peach suggests that this "reveals that the engraver had some difficulty in resolving the need to reconcile Byron's informal pose in Westall's original painting with the traditional head and shoulders format of portrait engravings reproduced in the *European Magazine*."[16] Blood replaces the single-breasted jacket with

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[13] The MS is in the Roe Byron Collection at Newstead Abbey. The British Library has another MS letter, from February 1810, from James Asperne to the recently widowed Mrs Whitefoord, requesting a portrait of her husband Caleb, which gives some idea of what Asperne's approach to Byron might have been like.
[14] Cited in Peach, 'Portraits of Byron', p. 44.
[15] Westall exhibited a sketch for this portrait in his own exhibition at the New Gallery in Pall Mall in 1814. See *Catalogue of An Exhibition of a Selection of The Works of Richard Westall R. A. including two hundred and forty Pictures and Drawings which have never before been exhibited* (London: Joyce Gold, 1814). Byron's portrait is item 98. Admission was one shilling. Joyce Gold, who printed this catalogue, also printed the *European Magazine* for Asperne.
[16] Peach, 'Portraits of Byron', p. 44.

a double-breasted coat, covers Byron's throat with a white cravat and substitutes large flamboyant collars for the small ones in the painting. Byron's hair becomes darker and his eyebrows more clearly defined, and his distinctively small ear lobes are enlarged. His neck ends up unrealistically elongated, and his body much fuller than in the original and in other portraits from this period. Altering the neck makes Byron's head seem erect, where before his chin lent pensively on his hand. Where Byron was previously gazing out of the frame lost in thought, he now stares disdainfully away from the viewer. Westall's suggestions of background are left out. Finally, other names appear, subscribing Byron, in the words beneath the picture: Blood, Westall, Asperne.

The body which Blood thus casually emended was that body which Byron produced with such effort through his gruelling dieting, adorned with such care in fine dandified clothes, and had represented at some expense in portraits. Byron took pains to maintain control over his body and how it was seen, but this, one of the first images of him to circulate widely, intervened in his own bodily strategies of self-presentation, producing a body that has little in common with that in the officially sanctioned Westall painting which it claims as its original. More fully in the public eye than ever before, Byron was in danger of losing control over how his body appeared to the public. Beefed-up by Mr Blood, his efforts to produce the slim and delicately attractive body he wanted proved to be in vain.[17] In the same year, Westall exhibited his painting, Phillips exhibited his "cloak" portrait at the Royal Academy, and both began to circulate in engravings, for example those by Charles Turner and Samuel Agar.[18] Byron's image now proliferated and promiscuously circulated, reaching a new and much wider audience. The body to which *The Giaour* directed readers' attention was now in the public domain, and Byron's letter to Asperne shows the fine balance of ambitions and anxieties that this development generated.

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[17] Byron is still liable to pumping up, as the bronze statue by Cypriot sculptor N. Kotzamanis erected in Messolonghi by the International Byron Society in 1995 indicates. The statue is based on the Albanian portrait, but it renders the liberator-Byron far more broad-shouldered and muscular than he appears in the original.
[18] See Peach, 'Portraits of Byron' cat. no. 11.12 and 13.35.

On one level Byron does his best to give the impression of being too busy with more important things to give much thought to "trifling" magazine engravings, reminding Asperne that it was not his idea in the first place. But his refusal to sit for Drummond may indicate his discomfort at the proposal as well as his full diary. Flatteringly insisting that he would hate Drummond's talents to be "thrown away on a restless and impatient subject", Byron arranged for Asperne to reproduce one of the portraits he had already commissioned, restricting the circle of people who collaborated in the dissemination of his image by excluding Drummond. Soliciting the gaze of a wider audience meant compromising his control over how he was perceived, since it inevitably involved others such as Asperne, Westall and Blood. Although he professed to think highly of Drummond, Byron was determined to be represented by artists he selected and paid himself, in order to retain some degree of control over how he appeared to his public. As Blood's engraving shows, Byron's image, in spite of his precautions, slipped out of his control in the process of becoming available to a wider audience.

The Bride of Abydos provided Byron with a way of imagining, in a heightened style, structures of looking comparable to those in which his celebrity placed him, and a way of modelling possible responses to the situation before he enacted one. When he constructed Giaffir's regime of surveillance, he included a safety valve. Selim and Zuleika are able to stand outside Giaffir's scopocracy when they conceal themselves in the cave, and that's where they go first when they elope. "They reach'd at length a grotto, hewn / By nature but enlarged by art" (2. 100-01). They've both visited the cave regularly before, Zuleika to play her lute and read her Koran (2. 101-02) and Selim to meet with the band of pirates that he secretly leads (2. 382-83). Within the cave's confines, concealed from prying eyes, Zuleika and Selim are free from the constraints placed on them outside. Selim breaks the Muslim prohibition on wine (2. 127-8, 317-20) and Zuleika, looking up from her Koran, indulges in a heterodox speculation about the nature of heaven for women:

And oft in youthful reverie
She dream'd what Paradise might be:
Where woman's parted soul shall go
Her Prophet had disdain'd to show[.]

(2. 104-07)

The cave is a paradoxically liberating confinement, one they are happy to take to in place of the confinements of wider society.[19] In fact, Selim's projected future with his pirate crew is imagined as a whole series of enclosures and tight corners. He will be "girt by my band" (2. 412), but claims that, "My tent on shore, my galley on the sea, / Are more than cities and Serais to me" (2. 390-91). Selim wants to trade the walled-in spaces of city and caravanserai for the equally restrictive tent and boat, but he is convinced that these confinements, out of Giaffir's sight, will be liberating ones. The smallest space he pictures himself in is Zuleika's embrace, which provides "our world within our arms":

Ay – let the loud winds whistle o'er the deck,
So that those arms cling closer round my neck:
The deepest murmur of this lip shall be
No sigh for safety, but a prayer for thee!

(2. 454-57)

In mortal danger on the deck of a ship in a storm, Selim pictures himself encircled by Zuleika's arms. Is this liberation or confinement, hugging or strangling? Like so much in the poem, it depends how you look at it.

Once he has escaped from Giaffir's coercive gaze, which effeminised his body in a powerful misreading, we are invited to look at Selim's body in a new way. In twenty lines, Byron presents Selim's newly masculine body to the reader's gaze (2. 131-50). He is now adorned not in the luxurious vestments that become a pacha's son, but in the simple clothes of a sailor. His ornamental dagger is replaced by a brace of pistols and a sabre which is for use and not for show. And he's armoured with a cuirass and greaves. "High command" now "[speaks] in his eye, and tone, and hand," where

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[19] For a broader discussion of comparable themes, see Victor Brombert, 'The Happy Prison: A Recurring Romantic Metaphor' in *Romanticism: Vistas, Instances, Continuities*, ed. by David Thorburn and Geoffrey Hartman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), pp. 62-79.

before Giaffir read effeminacy and worthlessness (2. 147-48). The reader, who had previously scrutinised the Giaour for signs of his innermost nature, has to learn in *The Bride of Abydos* that appearances can be deceptive, and that individuals (including, implicitly, Byron) can present themselves differently to different audiences at different times. When Selim reveals his alter ego, he transforms his body in our eyes from a docile site of coercion to an eloquent site of resistance. Where his eyes and hands were previously read by Giaffir, they now speak for themselves, as Selim performs an aspect of himself that he had previously been forced to conceal. "I said I was not what I seem'd; / And now thou see'st my words were true" (2. 151-52). Selim's body, now actively signifying, confirms for Zuleika's eyes the truths that it was previously thought to belie when Giaffir's gaze rendered it docile.

Having rehearsed his characters' escape from the power-ridden network of unwelcome gazes, Byron tried to perform a comparable escape himself. It may have been necessary to imagine Selim and Zuleika's retreat to their cave before Byron could attempt his own retreat from the public eye, which he charted in his 1813-14 journal. He began the journal on 14 November 1813, the day after completing the fair copy of *The Bride of Abydos*, and continued it until 19 April 1814. The journal records Byron's growing dissatisfaction with the routine of Regency socialising in which his celebrity had involved him. The spectacular Lord Byron was an ornament to any guest list, but the journal shows him refusing invites and visits, making himself "invisible":

> The Duke of * * called. I have told them forty times that, except to half-a-dozen old and specified acquaintances, I am invisible. His grace is a good, noble, ducal person; but I am content to think so at a distance, and so – I was not at home.
>
> (BLJ III, 230)[20]

Later the same day, "Sharpe called, but was not let in, – which I regret." Byron notes that he "did not go to the Berrys' the other night", and then writes "To-night asked to Lord H.'s – shall I go? um! – perhaps" (BLJ III,

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[20] This journal was first published by Moore with many omissions, indicated by asterisks. The MS has since disappeared, and Marchand reprints Moore's text in BLJ.

231). In fact he did go to Holland House that evening, but generally he professed a disliking for society which, although it was partly a misanthropic pose that he adopted even in the privacy of his journal, was expressed with some acrimony.[21] "Invited out to a party, but did not go; – right. Refused to go to Lady * *'s on Monday; – right again" (BLJ III, 237). All the world could not tempt him out of his solitude:

> I have sent an excuse to Madame de Staël. I do not feel sociable enough for dinner today; – and I will not go to Sheridan's on Wednesday. [...] All the world are to be at the Staël's to-night, and I am not sorry to escape any part of it. I only go out to get me a fresh appetite for being alone.
>
> (BLJ III, 238)

At the height of his celebrity, when he was most in the public eye, Byron felt besieged by visitors announced with "knocks single and double" (BLJ III, 235). In response, he attempted to make himself invisible to the audience who celebrated him.

Using the 1813-14 journal to unpack the Years of Fame reveals how quickly Byron became dissatisfied with his celebrity status. In the privacy of his journal, he began to question what it *meant* to be a celebrity:

> Last night, *party* at Lansdowne House. To-night, *party* at Lady Charlotte Greville's – deplorable waste of time, and something of temper. Nothing imparted – nothing acquired – talking without ideas – if anything like *thought* in my mind, it was not on the subjects on which we were gabbling. Heigho! – and in this way half London pass what is called life. To-morrow there is Lady Heathcote's – shall I go? yes – to punish myself for not having a pursuit.
>
> (BLJ III, 254)

Celebrity did not seem to be a pursuit to make sense of his life, and when Byron ventured into the gaze of society he seemed to be in danger of dissolving into nothingness. "At five-and-twenty, when the better part of life is over, one should be *something*; – and what am I? nothing but five-and-twenty – and the odd months" (BLJ III, 204). His celebrity made him a fixture

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[21] Cf. Byron's ironic comment "I always begin the day with a bias towards going to parties; but, as the evening advances, my stimulus fails, and I hardly ever go out – and, when I do, always regret it" (BLJ III, 252).

of Regency society, but having declared himself "sick of parliamentary mummeries", he had no clear sense of his social role (BLJ III, 206). He risked becoming a zero, a man with no vocation but that of the socialite. "I shall never be any thing, or rather always be nothing" he glumly concluded (BLJ III, 218).[22]

In response to this distrust of his celebrity status, Byron secured his own integrity with an ironic hermeticism, causing Hobhouse to say that he was "growing a *loup garou*, – a solitary hobgoblin" (BLJ III, 246). Having withdrawn to Newstead for New Year 1814, he wrote to Murray on his twenty-sixth birthday that if the Abbey were not about to be sold (as he thought), "I believe I should hardly quit the place at all – but shut my doors & let my beard grow" (BLJ IV, 36). To support this cautious withdrawal, Byron turned from public poetry to the private prose of the journal, and burnt the poems he couldn't resist writing. Between finishing *The Bride of Abydos* and the end of the year, Byron on several occasions burnt pieces of creative writing that he had started; a "song," a "Roman" and a poem, and it was not until 18 December that he wrote and kept the two sonnets 'To Genevra'.[23] Burning verse rather than publishing, Byron turned instead to the private medium of his journal, writing "I am so far obliged to this Journal, that it keeps me from verse, – at least from keeping it" (BLJ III, 235).[24] Poetry that wasn't kept could never come into the public eye. Turned in upon himself, Byron began carefully to audit his transactions with the outside world in an attempt to prevent it from encroaching too greatly on his selfhood. Hidden away in his rooms in The Albany, he noted that "I have not stirred out of these rooms for these four days past" (BLJ III, 257). Confining himself in his

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[22] *The Giaour* no longer seemed to be a worthy achievement. "It is no wonder that I wrote one – my mind is a fragment", Byron wrote (BLJ III, 237). He stressed *The Bride of Abydos's* completeness by contrast, describing it to Moore as "not a Fragment" and to Murray as "my first *entire* composition of any length" (BLJ III, 184, 182).

[23] References to burnt fragments of writing: BLJ III, 210, 217, 235. Byron mentions the two sonnets in his last journal entry of 1813 (BLJ III, 240). They were first published with the second edition of *The Corsair* and are printed in CPW III, 104-05.

[24] Byron also wrote to Murray ten days after the last entry in his journal, repaying the money he had received for copyrights, and asking Murray to destroy all copies of *The Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos*. He provided no reason "except my own caprice" (BLJ IV, 108). Byron changed his mind a few days later, but never explained his reasons. See Marchand, I, 448-49.

rooms, declining invitations and turning visitors away, Byron patrolled the boundaries of his subjectivity, diarizing in an attempt to preserve his integrity, to make himself proof against incursions from others.

But whilst *The Bride of Abydos* enabled Byron imaginatively to explore the possibilities for escaping from the public gaze to a liberating confinement, he also used the poem to critique that response. Only a very limited audience – Zuleika and the pirates – sees Selim's transformation, and it seems uncertain whether this should be thought of as a threat to Giaffir, or only as dressing up for a specific circle of friends. Selim "ask[s] no land beyond my sabre's length" (2. 433). He does not envisage the personal freedom that he seeks ever being transferred to others beyond his band of men. What works for Selim in the confines of cave, tent, boat or pirate band won't work for the rest of those subjected to Giaffir's regime. The freedom that comes from confining oneself away from the gaze of power is shown to be freedom only within those confines, leaving the pirates in their cave to ponder victories to which Selim cannot lead them:

> The last of Lambro's patriots there
> Anticipated freedom share;
> And oft around the cavern fire
> On visionary schemes debate,
> To snatch the Rayahs from their fate.
> So let them ease their hearts with prate
> Of equal rights, which man ne'er knew;
> I have a love for freedom too.
>
> (2. 380-87)

The pirates see themselves as descendants of the Greek revolutionary Lambro Canzani (whom Byron mentions in a note to this passage), and imagine themselves liberating the Rayahs (those who pay the capitation tax, according to the note). But while Selim professes his love for this ideal, he dismisses the possibility of equality as only "prate": the pirates, with their "visionary schemes", may "ease their hearts" but will never help the mass of their countrymen.

For Selim to be free only on his own terms and within the confines he chooses for himself carries the risk of solipsism. The liberating confinement may not be a preliminary to wider liberation, nor a brief chance to recuperate from the pressure of others' gazes, but may make it impossible to function in the wider world. The cave temporarily provides both strategic cover (protecting against bullets) and existential safety (protecting against unwelcome gazes). But Selim doesn't survive for long once he leaves its confines. He looks back at Zuleika, hoping for a reciprocal glance that will confirm him in his alternative identity, but "that fatal gaze he took, / Hath doom'd his death, or fix'd his chain" (2. 565-66). Selim cannot always choose his spectators. He wants Zuleika for an audience, but when he leaves the cave he re-enters Giaffir's scopocracy, where he is cut down by the tyrant's gaze, which is "too nearly, deadly aim'd to err" (2. 575). He dies upon a glance.

Byron's attempt to enact the retreat to a liberating confinement that he had imagined for his characters, controlling his transactions with others in a bid to reassert his self-sufficiency, exposed him to the same risks he envisaged in the poem. His journal's comments on eating reveal ways in which his assertion of autonomy became disabling when he fixed on food as the symbol and prototype of his claims to subjective integrity. Socialising often meant dining out, and seeing the Regency's enormous gluttony and prodigality. Eating other people's food was a bodily transaction with the outside world that had particular significance for Byron. He was dieting rigorously at this time, determined that he would "*not* be the slave of any appetite" and that he would avoid "the horrors of digestion" (BLJ III, 212). He recorded an abstemious week in November 1813:

> I have dined regularly to-day, for the first time since Sunday last – this being Sabbath, too. All the rest, tea and dry biscuits – six *per diem*. I wish to God I had not dined now! – It kills me with heaviness, stupor, and horrible dreams; – and yet it was but a pint of bucellas, and fish. Meat I never touch, – nor much vegetable diet.
>
> (BLJ III, 212)

I've already mentioned Byron's troubled eating habits, and the effort with which he produced a body that he thought fit for the public eye. Around 1813-14, I suggest, Byron's dieting became pathological. He began to go without food for days at a time, noting on separate occasions that he went out "not having tasted food for the preceding forty-eight hours" and "without eating at all since yesterday" (BLJ III, 237, 223). It ceased to be a matter of wanting to be slimmer, or to maintain his low weight, and became a neurotic effort to control the incursions of the outside world into his body and thus into his identity. He described his regimen like this:

> When I *do* dine, I gorge like an Arab or a Boa snake, on fish and vegetables, but no meat. I am always better, however, on my tea and biscuit than any other regimen, and even *that* sparingly.
>
> (BLJ III, 226)

"I wish I could leave off eating altogether", he asserted (BLJ III, 237). Materialising the anxieties about control and autonomy raised by Blood's engraving, Byron's disordered eating turned the artistic issues that troubled him at this time into physiological ones. He played out his difficult relationship with his audience on his own emaciated body. As a result, he noted, "My stomach is entirely destroyed by long abstinence, and the rest will probably follow" (BLJ III, 230).

Byron's lowest recorded weight gives a body mass index of 19, which Arthur Crisp describes as "not quite low enough for a textbook diagnosis of anorexia nervosa."[25] It seems likely that Byron avoided having his weight recorded when it was exceptionally low, so we may not have the full picture. Crisp concludes that "Byron undoubtedly had a persistent severe eating disorder."[26] Dr. Richard Moxton is generally thought to have given the first account of pathologically disordered eating in 1689, describing both male

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[25] Arthur Crisp, 'Commentary: Ambivalence Toward Fatness and its Origins', *British Medical Journal*, 315 (December 1997) 1703. This is a commentary on Jeremy Hugh Baron's article in the same issue, op. cit.

[26] Ibid. Retrospective diagnosis is always dubious and doesn't interest me here *per se*. Byron didn't show all the symptoms now attributed to anorexia nervosa – no loss of intellectual interest or ability and no loss of libido, for instance – but there are insights to be gained from the medical and cultural writing that concerns eating, and I unashamedly appropriate that work here for literary critical purposes.

and female cases. William Gull coined the term anorexia nervosa in 1874. Since then medical discourse concerned with nosology and aimed at treatment has intersected with feminist discourse concerned with cultural theory and aimed at political change, to characterise eating disorders of all kinds as social conditions.[27] Most modern thinking in this area considers disordered eating as a symptom of psychological problems that are not finally about food at all, but about maintaining a minimal level of control in a life felt to be going out of control.[28] Although there are good reasons why food becomes an obsessional focus, the obsession and not the food is essential. The sufferer is engaged in a "struggle for control" over their body, with the body becoming the ground of a suicidal battle for agency in their lives.[29] According to Susan Bordo, "the anorexic, typically, experiences her life as well as her hungers as being out of control."[30] Controlling one's body, then, appears as the first step towards controlling one's life. In discussing Byron's disordered eating here, I want to draw attention to the ways in which,

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[27] Feminist theory suggests that anorexia has its roots in the patriarchy, and that the rise in cases in the twentieth century should be compared to the nineteenth-century phenomenon of hysteria. In this view anorexia reveals not the sufferer's inability to function in the world, but the injustice of a world that oppresses her. The anorexic body, by this thinking, can be seen as a political statement, a hunger strike in support of a cause and a critique of the female body's objectification in Western culture.

[28] Standard medico-psychological work on eating disorders includes: Hilde Bruch, *Eating Disorders: Obesity, Anorexia Nervosa and the Person Within* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), R. A. Gordon, *Eating Disorders: Anatomy of a Social Epidemic* (London: Blackwell, 1999), David Marcus and Morton Wiener, 'Anorexia Nervosa Reconceptualised from a Psychosocial Transactional Perspective', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 59, no. 3 (1989), 346-54 and Roger Slade, *The Anorexia Nervosa Reference Book* (London: Harper and Row, 1984). Arthur Crisp advances the alternative theory, not relevant here, that anorexia is a phobic response to the onset of puberty, and that the anorexic woman welcomes amenorrhoea and aims to maintain a childlike figure. A. H. Crisp, 'Some Aspects of the Psychopathology of Anorexia Nervosa' in *Anorexia Nervosa: Recent Developments in Research*, ed. by P. L. Darby and others (New York: Alan Liss, 1983), pp. 15-28. Polemically feminist perspectives are supplied by Susie Orbach, *Hunger Strike: The Anorectic's Struggle as a Metaphor for our Age* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986) and the chapter 'Food' in Germaine Greer, *The Whole Woman* (London: Doubleday, 1999), pp. 56-63. Social theories of weight consciousness are offered by Keith Walden, 'The Road to Fat City: An Interpretation of the Development of Weight Consciousness in Western Society', *Historical Reflections*, 12, no. 3 (1985), 331-373 and Susan Bordo, 'Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture' in *Feminism and Foucault*, ed. by Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988). Much of Bordo's work is relevant here, especially her essay 'Reading the Slender Body' in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. by Nicholas Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 214-22. The question of looking at male bodies arises in Jeff Hearn, *Men in the Public Eye* (London: Routledge, 1992) and Peter Middleton, *The Inward Gaze: Masculinity and Subjectivity in Modern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[29] Bruch, p. 251.

[30] Bordo, 'Anorexia Nervosa', p. 96.

once he entered the public eye, he felt the body that he'd cultivated slipping out of his control. Dieting was a way to maintain a minimal level of control. Asserting the right to choose what went into his body was a way to reassert the most basic autonomy.

I take Blood's engraving, with its many alterations to Byron's body, as an emblem for an element of Byron's celebrity. Byron's celebrity required careful self-presentation, physically through his diets and discursively through his writing. But it also meant that his presentation became mediated through artists, publishers and editors, exposing him to an audience which actively intervened, emending, embellishing and establishing entirely new significations. Controlling his food intake was an attempt, at a minimal material level, to regain control over an out-of-control body, and thus of his own celebrity image. He began to renew his control by carefully regulating his contact with the outside world, in a symbolic economy where food, as Maud Ellman suggests, has great importance:

> It is through the act of eating that the ego establishes its own domain, distinguishing its inside from its outside. But it is also in this act that the frontiers of subjectivity are most precarious. Food, like language, is originally vested in the other, and traces of that otherness remain in every mouthful that one speaks – or chews. From the beginning one eats for the other, from the other, with the other: and for this reason eating comes to represent the prototype of all transactions with the other, and food the prototype of every object of exchange.[31]

Withdrawing from public performances into the privacy of his journal, Byron relished his increasing isolation as a sign of his autonomy. Associating food with society, he rejected both, writing "would I were an ostrich, and dieted on fire-irons, – or any thing my gizzard could get the better of" (BLJ III, 233). Instead of burying his head, he starved himself of food and company, writing "I have not dined out, nor, indeed, *at all*, lately: have heard no music – have seen nobody" (BLJ III, 217). To venture into company too often would be to risk everything: "three days' dining would destroy me" (BLJ III, 223). To stuff himself would be to dissolve.

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[31] Ellman, p. 53.

As well as expressing a will to control, Byron's slender body implicitly critiqued the overindulgence of Regency society, which he saw all around him. The body and its condition, as feminists have argued, are political matters, and Byron's starvation, seen in this light, is a protest against the upper echelons of his society, who wasted staggering amounts of food while, as Byron was aware, workers in the North of England were quite literally starving.[32] His disordered eating also registered a protest against the way his audience objectified him, treating his body as a commodity to be reproduced, exchanged, upgraded and – sooner or later – disposed of. Blood's engraving participated in this objectification. Byron's dieting, which was initially a way of producing a body fit for the public eye, became an attempt to maintain his integrity under public scrutiny by limiting his transactions with the world, and a tacit critique of the way his body was viewed as an object for consumption. Refusing food, withdrawing into solitude and burning his writings were all connected ways of avoiding the interventions of others into his self-presentation and self-understanding.

So, when Byron's celebrity alerted him to the coercion of public visibility and the compromised autonomy of self-presentation it produced, he used *The Bride of Abydos* to imagine possible responses to the pressure of the public gaze. When he withdrew from society, restricting even his bodily transactions with the outside world, he was enacting a scenario he had thought through in the heightened terms of his tale. At the same time, however, he had also used the poem to adumbrate a more assertive possibility. *The Bride of Abydos* also hinted that, while structures of visibility could be technologies of coercion, the gaze could also become a weapon of resistance. For Byron, it was easier to write this insight down that it was to live up to it. When Giaffir taunts Selim with being the son of a slave

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[32] On Regency menus, food and gastronomy, see Venetia Murray's chapter 'The Age of Indulgence', pp. 176-200. For recipes Byron might have eaten, as well as an essay on his diets, see Wilma Paterson, *Lord Byron's Relish: The Regency Cookery Book* (Glasgow: Dog and Bone, 1990). For an essay on Byron's representation of eating, see Peter W. Graham, 'The Order and Disorder of Eating in Byron's *Don Juan*,' in *Disorderly Eaters: Texts in Self-Empowerment*, ed. by Lilian R. Furst and Peter W. Graham (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), pp. 113-23.

(unaware that Selim knows himself to be the son of the pacha whom Giaffir murdered and supplanted), Selim inwardly boils with fury:

> Thus held his thoughts their dark career;
> And glances ev'n of more than ire
> Flash forth, then faintly disappear.
> Old Giaffir gazed upon his son
> And started; for within his eye
> He read how much his wrath had done;
> He saw rebellion there begun[.]
>
> (1. 112-18)

Selim looks rebelliously back at Giaffir, reflecting his wrath back at him. Looking, which is usually pressed into the service of Giaffir's regime, is here mobilised against it. Selim's subversive looking makes Giaffir start, and he redoubles his own surveillance, resolving to "watch him closer than before" (1. 143).

Looking is the form through which Giaffir's tyranny maintains its control, but it's not his prerogative alone; vision does not belong exclusively to the dominant order. In Foucault's words, "It's a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised."[33] Because looking belongs to no one and serves no one in particular, it can be appropriated, at least temporarily, by the oppressed Selim and mobilised against the despot Giaffir. For instance while Giaffir boasts that "I mark thee – and I know thee too" (1. 120):

> As sneeringly these accents fell,
> On Selim's eye he fiercely gazed:
> That eye return'd him glance for glance,
> And proudly to his sire's was raised,
> Till Giaffir's quail'd and shrunk askance –
> And why – he felt, but durst not tell.
>
> (1. 126-31)

Selim outstares Giaffir, the steadiness of his gaze revealing his strength, pride and rectitude. Giaffir, usually the tyrant of looking, can't bear Selim's gaze, and shrinks. For Selim and Zukeika looking, like loving, is a kind of power or a kind of freedom available to those who are denied more tangible

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[33] Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 156.

liberties. Selim's eye resists Giaffir's coercive misreading of his body as effeminate. While he is denied the chance to break Giaffir's lance, either in open battle or in military exercises, Selim can still break his gaze. He "return[s] him glance for glance" and proves his power equal to Giaffir's. The individual eye that observes Giaffir's tyranny and accurately recognises its callousness is a silent accusation, bearing witness to his oppressive regime and implicitly judging it. When Selim dies, he has stopped looking, for a moment, in this resistant way, turning not full into Giaffir's face, but back to Zuleika. That backward glance is directed towards the cave, retreat, confinement, solipsism and ineffectuality, and it costs Selim his life.

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THE HANDLING OF *HEBREW MELODIES*

By the end of 1814, when *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* was in its ninth edition and his verse tales numbered four, Byron was a poet with a number of problems. He had mined his experiences of exotic travels almost to exhaustion – he had some unpublished scraps of Oriental poetry, but seemed incapable of turning them into a fifth verse tale. The sheen had worn off his celebrity, making fame a fact of life which was rapidly becoming routine. Worse still, his series of four Turkish Tales was increasingly being charged with that most unByronic of qualities: predictability. Lord Byron, it was whispered, had written himself out, and what was to come promised only paler and paler imitations of his former glories. Where once Byron's poetry had made him a celebrity, it now seemed that his poetry would be read only because he was a celebrity. George Daniel, in *The Modern Dunciad* (1814), put the complaint into Popeian couplets:

> The town is pleas'd when BYRON will rehearse,
> And finds a thousand beauties in his verse;
> So fix'd his fame – that write whate'er he will,
> The patient public must admire it still;
> Yes, – though bereft of half his force and fire,
> They still must read, – and, dozing, must admire[.][1]

But while Byron was heading for an impasse and in need of a new direction, Murray was becoming aware that the profitable poet he and Byron had collaboratively created was not a limitless source of reputation and income.

Byron's meteoric rise to fame was a business success story to make any entrepreneur proud. His relationship with his publisher, as I have suggested, was an important element of his celebrity. It also impacted on Byron's writing in ways that studying his celebrity can bring into focus.[2]

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[1] George Daniel, *The Modern Dunciad: A Satire* (1814), cited in Rutherford, p. 76.
[2] Caroline Franklin is one among several scholars who have recently shown the extent to which "The Murray circle [...] mediated between Byron and a mass readership in the years of fame (1812-16)". But from the beginning poet and publisher came to a series of quiet compromises when their interests or impulses seemed to conflict. Franklin observes that "[Byron] had to make compromises either in self-censorship when composing, or in mutually agreed adjustments to his manuscripts, in order to keep Murray as his publisher as long as he did." Caroline Franklin, *Byron: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 54, 44-45.

Technological advances in printing and the expansion of commercial publishing meant that, in the Romantic period, poets were increasingly forced to engage with their publishers in new ways, while often theorising poetry as something apart from, and untouchable by, commercial interests. In Byron's case that engagement was often highly collaborative, but always subject to strain. Poet and publisher differed in their politics, but Murray's political conservatism was less of a problem for Byron than his business caution. Murray had urged Byron to alter the freethinking stanzas of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* not because he objected to their content, but in case they should "deprive [him] of some customers amongst the Orthodox."[3] An astute businessman, Murray hedged his bets and reduced his risks to a minimum. As well as Byron's poems, he published the Tory *Quarterly Review*, and the wildly successful *Domestic Cookery* by Mrs Rundell. Byron quipped, in a parody of John Clare, "Along thy sprucest bookshelves shine / The works thou deemest most divine – / The 'Art of Cookery,' and mine, / My Murray."[4]

These different ventures clearly didn't cohere into a list with a single strong flavour, and so it was important that each element had a distinctive individual identity in the marketplace. Murray had invested heavily in the image of Byron as aristocrat, traveller and object of desire with just the right degree of thrillingly heterodox charm. With his purse and his reputation swelled by Byron's success, Murray moved from Fleet Street to the more stylish West End in 1813. He bought the Albemarle Street premises of his old rival William Miller, who had turned down *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Murray wrote to a relative:

> I have lately ventured on the bold step of quitting the old establishment to which I have been so long attached, and have moved to one of the best, in every respect, that is known in my business, where I have succeeded in a manner the most complete and flattering.[5]

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[3] Smiles, I, 208.
[4] '[To Mr. Murray]', ("Strahan, Tonson, Lintot of the times") 13-16 (CPW IV, 172).
[5] Smiles, I, 266.

The step was indeed bold: Murray had taken on a mortgage that he would not pay off until 1821 and, according to his biographer, "the step which Murray had taken was so momentous and the responsibility so great, that at times he was driven almost to the verge of despondency."[6] Murray must have watched his star poet's writing and its reception with some anxiety. After *Lara's* publication, Byron was unable or reluctant to extend the sequence of tales any further, and lacked the impetus to return to *Childe Harold*. He needed to find a new direction. But Murray wanted yet more of the poetry which had made Byron's name and was making his publisher's fortune. While Byron needed new subjects and new styles so as not to atrophy, Murray needed more of the same to sustain his income.

In this chapter I want to tell a story of conflict between the celebrated product identity that Byron and Murray had collaboratively created, and the poet who had begun to find that identity constraining. Borrowing Michel de Certeau's terms, I associate his ideas of "strategy" with the business practices of the Tory publisher, and "tactics" with the artistic practices of the oppositional poet grappling with his own celebrity.[7] When discussing this phase of Byron's career, it is not meaningful to speak of Byron and Murray collaborating on a strategy for presenting Byron to the public through his poems, but only of what Certeau would call the *tactics* Byron engages in, given the fact of his publicity. Those tactics are sometimes in tune with Murray's strategy and sometimes in conflict with it. *Hebrew Melodies* has proved difficult for critics to accommodate in smooth narratives of Byron's career. This has led to the collection being marginalised or dismissed as alternately a sop or a fillip to the pious Annabella Milbanke.[8] I suggest that

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[6] Ibid. I, 235.
[7] See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), especially '"Making Do": Uses and Tactics', pp. 29-42.
[8] *Hebrew Melodies* has been neglected by Byron's critics, but there are discussions of the poems in Frederick W. Shilstone, *Byron and the Myth of Tradition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), pp. 99-112, Bernard Blackstone, *Byron: A Survey* (London: Longman, 1975), pp. 129-45, Gordon K. Thomas, 'The Forging of an Enthusiasm: Byron and the *Hebrew Melodies', Neophilologus,* 75 (1991), 626-36, Caroline Franklin, '"Some Samples of the Finest Orientalism": Byronic Philhellenism and Proto-Zionism at the Time of the Congress of Vienna,' in *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire*, ed. by Tim Fulford and Peter Kitson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 221-42 and Graham Pont, 'Byron and Nathan: A Musical Collaboration', *The Byron Journal,* 27 (1999),

its tactical importance lies precisely in this difficulty, and that its strangeness can be accounted for if we understand the tension between Byron's tactical attempt to write a reformed and newly satisfying poetry and Murray's subsequent strategy which attempted to contain the lyrics within familiar Byronic parameters. *Hebrew Melodies* is Byron's first, failed attempt to resist the logic of his celebrity and when critics marginalise the collection, they repeat Murray's strategy of containment. In this chapter, then, I am concerned with Byron's creative urge to write a different kind of poetry to that which sustained his fame, and Murray's business imperative to make sure that this poetry could still be read as recognisably Byronic; that it was still part of the Byronic sequence which was, and must remain, closely associated with the house of Murray. I use Certeau's terms to help locate Byron as a creative individual within both generic constraints and a promotional apparatus that increasingly seemed to impose someone else's agenda on him.

Before he began *Hebrew Melodies*, there were complaints that all Byron's poems were the same, that he was wasting his talent and that his scepticism was a danger to public morality. The *British Review* could "scarcely criticise as fast as Lord Byron can write;" but fortunately it was spared the need to review every new poem "by the uniformity of his lordship's productions" (RR I, 421).[9] The *Critical Review* accused Byron of squandering his talents on trash: "we regret to see powers that can unlock the springs of terror and pity with such fearful effect, wasted upon garish and incompatible fiction" (RR II, 635). And Byron was everywhere urged to reform, to take the lessons of Christianity to heart and further to ennoble his

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51-65. Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass have waged a campaign for the *Hebrew Melodies* to be understood as songs, beginning with Paul Douglass, '*Hebrew Melodies* as Songs: Why we Need a New Edition', *The Byron Journal*, 14 (1986), 12-21, continued by their contributions to the Paderborn Symposium: Frederick Burwick 'Identity and Tradition in the *Hebrew Melodies*' and Paul Douglass, 'Isaac Nathan's Settings for *Hebrew Melodies*' both in *English Romanticism: The Paderborn Symposium* (Essen: Die Blaue Eule, 1985), pp. 123-38, 139-51, and culminating in their facsimile edition of Nathan's settings: *A Selection of Hebrew Melodies, Ancient and Modern, by Isaac Nathan and Lord Byron,* ed. by Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988). This edition is hereafter cited as Burwick and Douglass.

[9] Theodore Redpath notes that "As the series [of Turkish Tales] went on there were [...] grumbles on the score of monotony." Redpath, p. 181.

poetry by directing it to virtuous ends.[10] One reader signing himself "H. S. B." was so delighted by *The Bride of Abydos* and so distressed by Byron's scepticism that he penned some poetry of his own for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, including these lines:

> If from that feeling heart, that radiant mind
> Religion beam'd, enshrining and enshrin'd;
> How would the holy Minstrels, who rejoice
> O'er triumphs far less brilliant, wake a strain,
> That e'en thy lay might emulate in vain,
> With all their hallow'd fire and pure angelic voice![11]

These critical strands came together in the *Christian Observer's* review of *The Corsair* (RR II, 578-90).[12] The anonymous reviewer mourns Byron's decision to withdraw from writing (stated in *The Corsair's* dedicatory letter to Thomas Moore), and ventures to hope that his leisure will now be spent in improving ways. He hopes that Byron will one day resume the Spenserian stanza, perhaps taking as his hero "a seventh knight, to whom we could assign the patronage of one of the choicest Christian Virtues," and builds to a peroration in which Byron is castigated for not expressing properly Christian sentiments (RR II, 584). Finally, the reviewer claims that he will give up reading all this degraded modern literature "till Christians shall begin to talk as Christians", and hopes to read Byron again only when the poet has reformed himself: "how should we then rejoice to meet our renovated friend!" (RR II, 589-90).

Byron could have ignored these criticisms if they hadn't chimed with a more personal dissatisfaction. In the two years between his first and second proposal to Annabella Milbanke, Byron had been in search of sensation: "in my pursuit of strong emotions & mental *drams* I found them to be sure and

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[10] E.g. "Visionary as the prospect may be, we cannot resist the temptation to indulge ourselves, for a moment, in realizing the glorious emancipation which Christianity would induce on the faculties of so noble a mind. [...] Deeply were it to be regretted, that such a mind should be occupied with anything short of the infinite and the eternal!" (RR II, 723).
[11] "H. S. B", 'Lines occasioned by reading *The Bride of Abydos*', *Gentleman's Magazine*, 84, no. 1 (1814), 592.
[12] Byron had earlier written to the editor of that journal to thank him for the "able and I believe just" review of *The Giaour*, which suggests that he might also have seen the subsequent review (BLJ III, 189-90).

intoxicated myself accordingly – but now I am sobered my head aches & my heart too" (BLJ IV, 217). The heartache was caused by his affair with his half-sister Augusta, which emotionally fascinated and morally alarmed Byron. His moral hangover worsened when Annabella accepted his second proposal, leaving him "quite horrified in casting up my *moral* accounts of the two intervening years" (BLJ IV, 179). She assured him that throughout their strange and cautious courtship, "I honored you for that pure sense of moral rectitude, which could not be perverted, though perhaps tried by the practice of Vice",[13] but Byron still affirmed that there was "nothing I would see altered in *you* – but so much in myself" (BLJ IV, 208). During the previous two years he had corresponded with Annabella about religion, discussed theological questions with Francis Hodgson and the future Bishop Kaye at Cambridge and become fascinated by Joanna Southcott.[14] Southcott had announced in 1813 (aged 63) that she was miraculously pregnant with the child of Christ, who would prepare the way for His Second Coming. Byron was understandably inclined to debunk, and insisted that he longed to know who the earthly father was, and how he had managed such a feat "for I am sure the common materials would not answer so pious a purpose".[15] But he was also "afraid seriously – that these matters will lend a sad handle to your profane Scoffers and give loose to much damnable laughter" (BLJ IV, 167). His concern about the sceptical scoffers – among whom he was so often numbered – is underlined by the Biblical reference signalled by the capital "S", "there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts" (II Peter 3. 3). By the end of 1814, Byron was tired of walking after his own lusts, and as his marriage drew closer, he promised anyone who would listen that he would reform, using that word "seriously" again and again. To Lady Melbourne:

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[13] Cited in Malcolm Elwin, *Lord Byron's Wife* (London: Macdonald, 1962), p. 167.
[14] See Elwin, *Lord Byron's Wife*, p. 171, and BLJ IV, 177. Byron and Annabella also discussed the theological writings of Richard Porson (BLJ IV, 168). Bishop Kaye recalled Hodgson and Byron arguing over "the question, determined by Locke in the negative, whether there is an innate notion of the Deity" (HVSV p. 95). Sadly, Kaye did not record who took which side.
[15] BLJ IV, 167. See also BLJ IV, 164, "[H]er being with child at 65 [sic] is indeed a miracle – but her getting any one to beget it – a greater."

> In course I mean to reform most thoroughly & become "a good man and true" in all the various senses of those respective and respectable appellations – seriously[.]
>
> (BLJ IV, 172)

To Thomas Moore:

> I must, of course, reform thoroughly; and, seriously, if I can contribute to her happiness, I shall secure my own. She is so good a person, that – that – in short, I wish I was a better.
>
> (BLJ IV, 178)

And to Lady Jersey:

> Pray forgive me for scribbling all this nonsense – you know I must be serious all the rest of my life – and this is a parting piece of buffoonery which I write with tears in my eyes expecting to be agitated.
>
> (BLJ IV, 196)

Marriage to the supremely moral Annabella would keep him away from Augusta and encourage him to leave behind the dissipation and disbelief of the last few years.[16] "A wife would be my salvation", he wrote in his journal (BLJ III, 241).[17] The fact that his marriage was only to last a year before descending into scandal, when Byron would embrace the role of the titanic anti-hero, should not blind us to the serious thought that he gave to reforming during his engagement. Byron was not immediately enthusiastic about the *Hebrew Melodies* project when Douglas Kinnaird interceded on behalf of the composer, Isaac Nathan. But he came to see the project, I suggest, as an opportunity to write his way out of the poetic and moral problems in which he felt himself mired. Writing himself out of dissipation and into marriage, he asked Annabella to make fair copies of some of the

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[16] Lady Melbourne, Byron's confidante, certainly saw his marriage in this light, and actively helped to bring it about. See *Byron's "Corbeau Blanc": The Life and Letters of Lady Melbourne*, ed. by Jonathan David Gross (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997).

[17] Byron also hinted that this reform would produce a newly serious kind of poetry. At the end of a long letter to Annabella in which he discusses his "by no means settled" religious opinions and promises that "I will read what books you please – hear what arguments you please", he writes, "you shall be 'my Guide – Philosopher and friend'" (BLJ IV, 177). The quotation figures Annabella as Henry St John to Byron's Pope, recalling Pope's assertion in *An Essay on Man* that St John is responsible for a new seriousness in his poetry: "urged by thee, I turn'd the tuneful art / From sounds to things, from fancy to the heart" (4. 391-92). Alexander Pope, *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. by John Butt, 11 vols (London: Methuen, 1939-69), III (i): *An Essay on Man*, ed. by Maynard Mack (1950), p. 166.

lyrics during their engagement and honeymoon, and while visiting his future parents-in-law, he used the Milbanke family Bible, working from the book in which his marriage to Annabella would shortly be recorded.[18] *Hebrew Melodies* provided a chance to write a new kind of poetry, whose content would be part of Byron's reformation and whose form was an innovation in his career. With the help of his unlikely collaborator, Isaac Nathan, and his first amanuensis, Annabella Milbanke, Byron would answer his newly strident critics and his newly awakened conscience at once.

In *Hebrew Melodies* typically Byronic concerns modulate into deeper keys. I will cite three cases. Firstly, the theme of (self-imposed) exile from a homeland – such as Harold's nonchalant search for new pleasures after those found in England pall, or the Giaour's lonely wanderings from Venice when he becomes "apostate from his own vile faith" (616) – turns into a meditation on Jewish Diaspora. The forced exile from Israel of the whole race, and the Jews' longing to return to their homeland, replace the self-motivated exiles who wander because they never want to go home:

> But we must wander witheringly,
> In other lands to die;
> And where our fathers' ashes be,
> Our own may never lie:
> Our temple hath not left a stone,
> And Mockery sits on Salem's throne.[19]

The idea of exile, through its connection with the Diaspora, then in turn becomes a metaphor for mortality as exile from God's presence. Judah is "where their God hath dwelt", but believers can now only return to His presence, their true homeland, after death, "The wild-dove hath her nest, the fox his cave, / Mankind their Country – Israel but the grave!"[20]

Secondly, Childe Harold's urbane cynicism, ennui and satiety return transformed into the religious themes of *contemptus mundi* and *vanitas*

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[18] Thomas L. Ashton, *Byron's Hebrew Melodies* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 26.
[19] 'The Wild Gazelle' 19-24 (CPW III, 292).
[20] 'Oh! Weep for Those' 4; 11-12 (CPW III, 292).

vanitatum. For example, in 'All is Vanity, Saith the Preacher', the first stanza recalls Childe Harold's revelry. While Harold's "goblets brimmed with every costly wine" (1. 11), this speaker's "goblets blushed from every wine", and Harold's "laughing dames in whom he did delight" (1. 11) become the "lovely forms" who caress the speaker of 'All is Vanity' (4). But this is no longer the sneer of the youthful Harold "who ne in virtue's ways did take delight" (1. 11); it is rather a quasi-ascetic rejection of worldly goods: "And not a trapping deck'd my power / That gall'd not while it glittered."[21] In the final stanza, the image of the tortured mind as a scorpion girt by fire from *The Giaour*, appears transformed by contact with Genesis. Scorpion-mind becomes serpent-heart and the mental anguish of remorse becomes the moral torment of sinfulness that "stings for evermore / The soul that must endure it" (23-24).

Finally, the scepticism about revealed religion with which Byron had been charged in the light of his earlier poetry becomes, in the mouths of his new speakers, a painful registering of the terrible silence of God in the face of injustice. In 'On Jordan's Banks' the speaker asks how God, who appeared on Sinai and is both loving and jealous, can allow His own land to be overrun and His chosen people to be exiled and dispersed, without intervening with compassion for His people and a terrible vengeance for His enemies:

> On Jordan's banks the Arabs' camels stray,
> On Sion's hill the False One's votaries pray,
> The Baal-adorer bows on Sinai's steep –
> Yet there – even there – Oh God! thy thunders sleep:
>
> There – where thy finger scorch'd the tablet stone!
> There – where thy shadow to thy people shone!
> Thy glory shrouded in its garb of fire:
> Thyself – none living see and not expire!
>
> Oh! in the lightning let thy glance appear!
> Sweep from his shiver'd hand the oppressor's spear:

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[21] 'All is Vanity, Saith the Preacher' 15-16 (CPW III, 300).

How long by tyrants shall thy land be trod?
How long thy temple worshipless, Oh God?

(CPW III, 293)

God remains silent in the face of the speaker's urgent rhetorical demand that He speak. Byron had been labelled a sceptic, but in this carefully patterned poem he gives his speaker a plea for certainty and a complaint that the ways of God are inscrutable.[22] These examples suggest that Byron was moving established themes in new directions in *Hebrew Melodies* and attempting to depart from popular formulae.

But Byron's attempt to use *Hebrew Melodies* to move his poetry in the direction of a new moral and theological seriousness was compromised both by the literary marketplace in which he took up his position and by Murray's handling of the collection's physical production. When Isaac Nathan advertised, in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for May 1813, that he was "about to publish 'Hebrew Melodies' all of them upwards of 1000 years old and some of them performed by the Antient Hebrews before the destruction of the Temple", he was planning to move into a crowded but lucrative market.[23] Romantic-period readers were enthusiastic for the antiquarianism of Macpherson's Ossian and Chatterton's Rowley, and there was a growing vogue for national melodies, embodied by Moore's *Irish Melodies*, which came out serially throughout the period. A publication which combined the two attractions, such as Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, was almost guaranteed success. Nor was Nathan the first to approach Byron to provide lyrics for a national melodies project.[24] When Byron wrote *Hebrew Melodies*, he wove in a variety of Hebraisms and names of scriptural places and people.[25] Importing Hebraic words to *Hebrew Melodies* reprised Byron's

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[22] The same ideas return in 'Were My Bosom as False as Thou Deem'st It To Be' (CPW III, 305), but there the painful questioning of 'On Jordan's Banks' is opposed by a sure faith in God's justice hereafter, despite the fact that He seems to permit injustice in this world.
[23] Cited in Ashton, p. 5.
[24] Ashton notes that he "had been anticipated as early as 1812, by the Scots music publisher, George Thomson", p. 11.
[25] Byron had already been writing about the Jews in the short poem 'Magdalen', which he dated 18 April 1814 (CPW III, 267-68). Set on Calvary, the poem's anti-Semitism is inescapable and embarrassing. "Israel's swarthy race" is blamed for the crucifixion; the Jews are presented as having an "idiot hatred", an "eagerness of blood" and "an idle lust of

technique of deploying Oriental words in his tales, and archaisms in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.[26] To some eyes, the diction of *Hebrew Melodies* was the same old thing played out against a new backcloth, with Scottish, Spenserian, or Turkish cycloramas replaced by picturesque views of Sinai. Turning to the Old Testament instead of the Koran, and Flavius Josephus instead of the *Bibliothèque Orientale*, Byron found ripe new poaching grounds for his magpie muse, and studded his verses with stolen linguistic gems. The scattering of Hebraisms, for some reviewers, was the outward form of Christian observance without the inward devotion.[27] It seemed as though, with their arrival in the Holy Land, Byron's language and themes had been translated, but not transformed.

The *British Review's* comments suggest why Byron's attempt to produce a newly reformed seriousness through a shift into Judaic diction was compromised before it began. The reviewer provided a recipe for cooking up national melodies:

> The way to proceed is first to prepare your melodies, and then you have the whole world lying between the polar circles, north and south, wherein to choose for them a proper designation and origin. One thing only will remain, which is to sprinkle the composition over with a few names of places and persons belonging to its adopted country.
> (RR I, 424)

Given the numbers in which national melodies collections were produced, the reviewer may well have felt swamped. Joseph Slater records books of

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useless gold". But, like so many Byronic heroes, they become ennobled by their unrepentant endurance of punishment.

[26] Jerome Christensen cites objections to this foreign diction from John Hookham Frere, the *Theatrical Inquisitor*, the *Satirist*, Lady Caroline Lamb and Wordsworth, and to his archaisms from George Ellis, and suggests that these complaints "reflect a longstanding concern about Lord Byron's style, which begins with Henry Brougham's wicked fun about *pibroch* in 'Lachin Y Gair'." Jerome Christensen, *Lord Byron's Strength*, pp. 136-37.

[27] The *British Review*, for example, objected to the sudden shift from Orientalism to superficial piety: "The writer ought, in a manner, to come out of the schools of the prophets [in order to imitate Hebrew poetry]. He should know his Bible, believe his Bible, and love his Bible, to write with true feeling upon the subjects of the Bible. Hitherto Lord Byron's Muse has had much more connection with the Koran than with the sacred register of all truth. With her pellise in disorder, her zone unbuckled, her cheek suffused, the Muse of Lord Byron steps forth from the polluted precincts of the seraglio, from her couch of roses and glittering kiosk, into the courts of the Lord's house" (RR I, 425).

Scottish Airs, Irish Melodies, Welsh Melodies, Scottish Melodies, Indian Melodies and *Welsh Airs*,[28] and the reviewer asserts that:

> If we should now see the melodies of Kamtschatka, or of Madagascar, or of the Hottentots, advertised, we should not only not be surprised, but we should know what to expect[.]
>
> (RR I, 424)

The reviewer describes a self-enfolded discourse in which ersatz markers of national authenticity were attached to generic lyrics in an utterly tendentious and endlessly transferable fashion, manufacturing kitsch to feed the public appetite for "authentic" specimens of antique national song. So long as the resulting confections were dusted with foreign words as though with icing sugar, the public found them palatable.

The national melodies genre, as the *British Review* described it, was a Baudrillardian closed circuit of simulacra, talking to itself in its own terms, but making no contact with the realities of national identity or religious belief. Once religious and national identity, so closely imbricated in Judaism, could be simulated with a sprinkle of words, *any* authenticity was imperilled. All national identities were up for grabs to all writers of melodies, and therefore none could be authentically expressed. Once authenticity becomes a choice amongst other choices, Baudrillard claims, it returns as a simulacrum of itself.[29] If Hebraism is understood to be one among many possible options for the writer of melodies, it can no longer be seen as the privileged vehicle of a reformed poetry, what Byron called "the sacred model" (BLJ IV, 220). Rex Butler has urged us to see Baudrillard's theory not as it is often perceived, as a gleefully intoxicated abandonment of the real in favour of surfing the postmodern waves of hyperreality, but rather as a defence of the real, a nostalgia for the real, or a series of interventions which aim to point to the vanishing real and, with increasing desperation, to search for the conditions in which it would again be possible to experience it. "[H]is problem", Butler writes, "is how to think the real when all is simulation".[30]

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[28] Joseph Slater, 'Byron's *Hebrew Melodies*', *Studies in Philology*, 49 (1952), 75-94 (p. 76).
[29] See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983).
[30] Rex Butler, *Jean Baudrillard: The Defence of the Real* (London: Sage, 1999), p. 17.

Byron's attempt to reform required a "real" or "authentic" expression of religious themes, where "Christians shall begin to talk as Christians", in contrast to the "degraded" poetry on which Byron's celebrity rested and with which other authors flooded the market. But choosing the national melodies genre (as described by the *British Review*) made it all but impossible for Byron to write a reformed poetry. Because the Hebraisms of *Hebrew Melodies* could be read as interchangeable both with the foreign words which signified the nationality of other melodies from Ireland to India, and with the foreign words that spiced Byron's tales, Byron's attempt to write a "reformed" poetry fell at the first fence, failing to differentiate itself either from the rest of the market or from his previous productions.

While some saw it as a step towards Christian faith, Byron's Jewishness was generally seen as just another costume for the poet to try on. In a poem called 'The Universal Believer; By Lord Byr*n, In Imitation of his Friend Tommy M**re'[31] the anonymous author ventriloquised Byron giving Lady Jersey an account of his career so far:

"Come, tell me," says J*RS*Y, one midnight at whist,
And she trump'd me the moment she spoke,
"Come riddle my riddle, come tell me the list
"Of the creeds you have sworn to and broke."
"Believe me, my syren," I bowing reply'd,
"Truth and title but seldom agree;
"But I'll try and remember how often I've ly'd,
"And my *lying* shall finish with thee."

(1-8)

"Byron" recounts that "first philosophy touch'd me" (9), and that he was an enthusiast for "rascals in France" (12), but that, "sicken'd of Frenchmen, to Turkey I flew" (17). There he learnt a variety of sybaritic Oriental ways, but finally these too palled:

"Then of freaks sadly tired, and lost in a fog
"Of systems, old, middle, and new,
"I turn'd my loose legs to the first synagogue,

[31] Anon., 'The Universal Believer; By Lord Byr*n, In Imitation of his Friend Tommy M**re' ([London(?)]: [n. pub.], [1815]). Preserved as a single sheet in the British Library.

"And at present I'm fix'd in - the Jew!
"So of critics and scissars no longer in dread,
"Thou thy BYR*N a Rabbi shalt see,
"By libel and psalmody earning my bread,
"And rhyming for NATHAN and thee!"

(25-32)

For the author of these lines, Judaism is not the route to reform, but simply another twist in the tale of Byron's reprobate career.

The second factor that compromised Byron's attempt to move in a new direction, away from the staples of his celebrity, is involved with the physical appearance of these poems in several books in 1815. The collection was a departure not only from popular formulae, but also from familiar formats, and the book that Isaac Nathan would produce was contentious even before it appeared. Nathan reported that one evening when he was at Kinnaird's house, Kinnaird said:

> Mr. Nathan, I expect a – a – that – a – you bring out these Melodies in good style – a – a – and bear in mind, that – a – a – his Lordship's name does not suffer from scantiness – a – a – in their publication.
> (HVSV p. 85)

Byron apparently visited Nathan the following day, saying "Nathan, do not suffer that capricious fool to lead you into more expense than is absolutely necessary; bring out the work to your own taste" (HVSV p. 85). Nathan's taste, in fact, was for a handsome and expensive volume. When *A Selection of Hebrew Melodies, Ancient and Modem with appropriate Symphonies & accompaniments* came out in April 1815 it was in crown folio (measuring approximately 36 x 24 cm) with an ornate engraved title page and dedication to Princess Charlotte. It sold for one guinea. This volume contained twelve melodies, with each lyric printed once under the music and once separately.[32] It was quite unlike anything Byron had published before: a larger format, more expensive and with a different publisher and collaborators. This singularity was a problem for Murray not simply because he could not make money from books that other people published, but

[32] For full bibliographical descriptions, see Ashton, pp. 210-11 and Burwick and Douglass, p. 41.

because it interrupted the previously unblemished association between publisher and celebrity poet. Murray would produce a multi-faceted strategy to repossess *Hebrew Melodies*, to contain its strangeness and rehabilitate it to the trajectory of Byron's collaboration with him. This strategy is subsequently extrapolated by Byronists who anthologise 'She Walks in Beauty' and forget the rest, masking the character of *Hebrew Melodies* by reducing the collection to its most uncharacteristic poem. I shift focus here from the words Byron wrote to the books Murray published, from the poet's tactical insistence on going his own way to the strategy which contains his tactics and reconnects his writing both to a linear narrative of poetic development and to a homogenising set of Byronic traits. I now turn to the second of the struggles with which I am concerned, away from Byron's attempts to reform himself by writing differently, and towards Murray's struggle for control over Byron's works, uniformity in their production and the creation of a recognisably "branded" Byron.

Murray first brought out an edition of *Hebrew Melodies*, which went into direct competition with Nathan's edition. Immediately after this he embedded the poems in the first collected editions of Byron's works.[33] The overall aim was to repossess Byron from Nathan by representing the melodies as part of Byron's works and Byron's works as part of Murray's list. As early as January 1815, Murray asked "does your Lordship wish or not to incorporate the Melodies in your collected works[?]"[34] This put Byron in rather a difficult position, since he had already given the copyright to Nathan.[35] He wrote to ask if Nathan would allow Murray "the privilege" of

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[33] As a collector, Thomas Wise was preoccupied with first editions and "other necessary Editions" (Thomas J. Wise, *A Bibliography of the Writings in Verse and Prose of George Gordon Noel, Baron Byron*, 2 vols (London: Printed for Private Circulation, 1932-33), I, xix). In accordance with this rationale, Wise provides no entry for Nathan's book, nor for the collected editions of Byron's works that Murray published in 1815 and which are crucial to Murray's handling of *Hebrew Melodies*. Thomas Ashton provides details of all the relevant books, and supersedes Wise on this point.

[34] Murray to Byron, "Monday" [2 January 1815?] (Murray archives).

[35] Nathan's biographer, Olga Phillips, quotes from a formal legal document, transferring *Hebrew Melodies'* copyright from Byron to Nathan for the sum of five shillings, witnessed by Kinnaird and William Hamilton, and dated 20 April 1814. See Olga S. Phillips, *Isaac Nathan, Friend of Byron* (London: Minerva, 1940), pp. 73-76. It has not been possible to locate this document. As I show below, Philips is not always reliable, but it is clear that an agreement existed between Byron and Nathan, whether written or informal.

including *Hebrew Melodies* in the forthcoming "complete edition of my *poetical effusions* [...] without considering it as an infringement of your copyright" (BLJ IV, 249). Byron wrote to Murray on 6 January, "Mr Kinnaird will I dare say have the goodness to furnish copies of the Melodies if you state my wish upon the subject – you may have them if you think them worth inserting" (BLJ IV, 250). But Nathan was understandably reluctant to let the lyrics out of his hands, and Murray wrote to Byron on 11 January:

> I was not <out> wrong in suspecting that Mr Kinnaird would not allow us to have the Melodies – but Mr Hobhouse thinks it unreasonable that they should not be included in the edition of your Lordships [sic] works collected
> – We had agreed that they should not be printed separately – nor even *announced* as contained in the works – but those who had the works would find them there with a note stating that they had been set to music very beautifully by so & so – which we supposed might operate as an advantageous announcement of the Music – & they would just have filled up our rather meagre Vol 4 –[36]

As I will show, all the promises in this letter were disingenuous. Byron was irritated, and exploded to Hobhouse on 26 January, "'The Melodies' – damn the melodies – I have other tunes – or rather tones – to think of – but – Murray *can't* have them, or shan't – or I shall have Kin[nair]d and Braham upon me" (BLJ IV, 260).[37] The matter was still unresolved on 17 February, when Murray wrote to Byron:

> I am delaying the publication of our edition in four volumes only until you find a leisure moment to strike off the dedication to your friend Mr. Hobhouse, who still thinks that it is not precisely the same thing to have music made to one's poems, and to write poetry for music; and I advise you most conscientiously to abide by the determination of Mr. Hobhouse's good sense.[38]

This correspondence was all about the projected four-volume collected edition, but before that Murray published *Hebrew Melodies* in May 1815. This book was in demy octavo, cost 5s. 6d. and contained twenty-four

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[36] Murray to Byron [Wednesday] 11 January 1815 (Bodleian Library, Dep. Lovelace Byron 155, f. 110).
[37] The tenor John Braham (c. 1774-1856) was Nathan's business partner in the *Hebrew Melodies* project and collaborated in some of the settings. He and Byron were acquainted through their association with Drury Lane Theatre.
[38] Smiles, I, 351.

melodies, plus 'On the Death of Sir Peter Parker, Bart.' It contained twice as many poems as Nathan's volume, at a fraction of the price and, importantly, it was uniform with Byron's other works.[39] With this volume, Murray went into direct competition with Nathan's book and detached the lyrics from the music for the first time. His ledgers show no record of any payment to Nathan for copyright.[40] Bringing out *Hebrew Melodies* in a format that matched the rest of Byron's publications helped to accommodate it in Byron's oeuvre, and this process was furthered by Murray's plans for collected editions.

Murray's *Hebrew Melodies* came with title pages and half-titles bound into the back, enabling and encouraging readers to bind up their own collected edition in two octavo volumes. These title pages invited readers to consolidate their Byron purchases into two volumes, buying those poems they hadn't got.[41] Those readers who did not want to bind up their own collected edition in two volumes could wait for the projected four-volume edition in small octavo, "including *Hebrew Melodies*" which was advertised in the back of Murray's edition of the melodies.[42] When this collected edition appeared, the melodies were in the fourth volume, along with thirty-six lyrics which had previously been appended to successive editions of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. This gave the impression that *Hebrew Melodies* was of a piece with Byron's other lyrics rather than, as I have argued above, a significant development of Byron's poetic concerns in a new direction.[43] Murray went on adding volumes to this edition as Byron continued writing, producing a set of eight uniform volumes by 1818. Each of these three

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[39] For full bibliographical descriptions, see Ashton, pp. 212-13, 200 and Wise, I, 103-04.
[40] Ashton, p. 213.
[41] These title pages exist in two states. In one state they specify the poems to be bound into each volume, with *Childe Harold* and Miscellaneous Poems in the first volume and *The Giaour, The Bride of Abydos, The Corsair, Lara,* 'Ode to Napoleon' and *Hebrew Melodies* in the second.
[42] As Wise notes, these advertisements are printed on sig. E4, and are therefore an integral part of the book. Some copies of Murray's edition also have additional leaves of advertisements bound in.
[43] This was the impression of the reader who bound his or her Byron books into the 2 vols. now in the British Library at 11604 f. 25, using the title pages supplied with Murray's *Hebrew Melodies.* The first volume of this set consists of the tenth edition of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, with appended lyrics, and *Hebrew Melodies.*

artefacts; Murray's edition of *Hebrew Melodies*, the two-volume "do-it-yourself" collected works and the four-volume collected works, contributed to the assimilation of *Hebrew Melodies* within Byron's oeuvre. Together they formed the mainstays of Murray's strategy for repossessing the poems, minimising their strangeness and making them seem like Byronic business as usual.

In addition, Murray used the poem 'On the Death of Sir Peter Parker, Bart.' as a thread to stitch the *Hebrew Melodies* into Byron's oeuvre. The poem first appeared anonymously in the *Morning Chronicle* on 7 October 1814. Murray reprinted it in the tenth edition of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, again in his edition of *Hebrew Melodies* and yet again in the fourth volume of the collected edition, where it is the last of the short poems printed before *Hebrew Melodies*. In this way, Murray ensured that when readers of *Childe Harold* turned to *Hebrew Melodies*, they easily recognised Byron's work because not only were the volumes uniform, but they were linked by this poem. The collected edition further consolidated the impression. The reviews indicate the success of Murray's strategy for establishing his edition of *Hebrew Melodies* as the definitive one, and for rehabilitating the decidedly different poems to the reassuring uniformity of Byron's works. Of the twelve journals whose notices of the melodies are collected by Donald Reiman, seven reviewed Murray's book, four reviewed Nathan's and one, the *Gentleman's Magazine*, noticed both. The dominance of his edition among the reviews may reflect Murray's well-established connections among journalists and the fact that he could afford to send out more review copies of his much cheaper book. He also spent forty-eight pounds on "advertising &c".[44] The reviewers continued the work Murray had started, making his book the version of *Hebrew Melodies* that mattered. Murray sold six thousand copies of his edition, and his ledgers show a profit of £836 5s.[45]

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[44] Murray ledger, reproduced in Ashton, p. 213. Note that this is more than twice the amount spent on the first edition of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.
[45] Ibid. This does not include the related profit from the collected edition.

No reliable figures are available for Nathan's edition, but soon after its publication he was forced to leave London to avoid his creditors.[46]

And so Byron returned, somewhat uneasily, to the verse tale. *The Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina* marked a return to the form that sustained Byron's celebrity, and to material that he thought he had abandoned. Both poems were assembled from fragments intended for a single tale, which Byron had been working on since as early as 1812.[47] Byron had been tinkering with these fragments throughout his celebrity, but he couldn't make them cohere into a poem. The fact that he gave the lines which later became the opening of *Parisina* to Nathan to publish in *Hebrew Melodies* as 'It is the Hour' suggests that, while he was working on the melodies, he may have thought that these materials would never become a narrative poem.[48] Had *Hebrew Melodies* been greeted as a new direction for Byron, refuting the charge of sameness and heralding his reform, he might well have abandoned these materials altogether. As it was, with Murray's publishing strategy stressing the uniformity of *Hebrew Melodies* and Byron's other poetry, he returned to the fragments yet again. Having decided around January 1815 that they should become not one but two poems, he worked up the fragments to produce two verse tales in his popular style.

Murray must have been delighted with Byron's return to familiar ground. But the adventure of *Hebrew Melodies* left its mark, in *Parisina's* very unByronic concentration on judgement and submission. After Hugo's speech to Azo, accusing him of crimes at least as great as Hugo's own crime of sleeping with his stepmother (234-317) he ceases to be a Byronic hero in

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[46] Olga Phillips, in her biography of Nathan, claims that Nathan's edition sold ten thousand copies and made a profit of five thousand pounds (p. 78). She gives no source for these figures, and neither the number of copies nor the profit margin seem credible. Her inflated figures are reproduced in Ashton, p. 48 and Franklin, *Literary Life*, p. 112. DNB notes that "the success of the volume was not sufficient to keep [Nathan] out of financial difficulties. He contracted a large number of debts, was compelled to quit London, and for a time lived in retirement in the west of England and in Wales."

[47] See McGann's commentary on the composition of both poems in CPW IV, 476-83 and 488-90.

[48] McGann observes that "It is unlikely that Byron would have given the lines to Nathan to publish as an independent 'Hebrew Melody' if he was at the same time aware that he would publish them soon as part of his verse tale." CPW III, 489.

the mould of the Giaour or Corsair. He deviates from their defiant unrepentance in the face of their crimes, and we see him "Kneeling at the Friar's knee" (397). Byron makes much of Hugo's remorse, confession and prayers. In complete contrast to the Giaour, who refused to be shriven, Hugo seeks a way of holy dying:

> As his last confession pouring
> To the monk, his doom deploring
> In penitential holiness,
> He bends to hear his accents bless
> With absolution such as may
> Wipe our mortal stains away.
>
> (412-18)

"[P]enitential holiness" had no place in the tales that preceded *Hebrew Melodies*. When he came to write Hugo's death, Byron characteristically directed attention to his eyes, which Hugo insists should not be blindfolded. But those eyes were left uncovered not so that they could stare fiercely out at their accusers, but so that they could be turned to heaven:

> He died, as erring men should die,
> Without display, without parade;
> Meekly had he bowed and prayed,
> As not disdaining priestly aid,
> Nor desperate of all hope on high.
> And while before the Prior kneeling,
> His heart was weaned from earthly feeling[.]
>
> (462-68)

Hugo dies with "No thought but heaven – no word but prayer" (72). The theological seriousness and eschatological focus of his repentance and death are the last trace of Byron's attempt to write a reformed poetry.

These features went unnoticed by the reviews. They complained that "the subject was every way ineligible" (RR I, 65) and many of them restricted themselves to criticising *The Siege of Corinth* and refused to discuss *Parisina* at all. The *British Critic* scrupled that "the story of the second poem is of a nature which must prevent us from entering into an analysis of its merits", while the *British Review* felt called upon to "solemnly proscribe this poem from the English fire-side, and summon all that religion, morality, and

policy enjoin, to give authority to the interdict" (RR I, 264; 434). Blind to the themes of judgement and submission, the reviewers once again complained that "This sameness of character begins to grow insufferably wearisome, and is indeed one of the chief faults of Lord Byron's poetry" (RR V, 2260). The *Champion* produced an indictment:

> Our charge against Lord Byron is, that, in a temper of restless and indecent disdain, he presumes on his popularity to become a downright scribbler, – trying the public to what extent they will receive what he does not think it worth his while to prepare.
>
> (RR II, 524)

Hebrew Melodies was Byron's attempt *not* to become a downright scribbler, *not* to presume on his popularity by giving his readers more of what they were familiar with, and recognised as Byronic. Ironically, the result of Murray's strategy was that once again people asked whether Byron had written himself out, whether he still justified his celebrity, whether his celebrity was itself the problem.

The tensions between the celebrity poet and the enterprising publisher who made celebrity his business show their strained interdependence. Byron's need to challenge himself with new poetic forms and styles in a protean saga of self-fashioning and refashioning was a headache for the businessman Murray, trying to create a recognisably branded Byron who would answer the demands of a large readership with the minimum business risk. Byron's return to the genre which characterised his celebrity suggests the extent to which business concerns feed back, influencing the kind of poetry that gets written. His risky tactical unpredictability succumbed to Murray's profit-motivated strategy of containment. To account for current criticism's comparative neglect of *Hebrew Melodies*, we need to recognise that Byron and Murray were pursuing conflicting objectives when the collection first appeared, and acknowledge that the ways in which Byron's poems were first marketed may still affect our focal points within his corpus.

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage [redacted]

Canto 3d. —

Ghent. April 20th 1816.

Began [redacted] at Sea. —

Stanza 1st. —

Thy face like thy Mother's! my fair child
Ada! sole daughter of my House and heart?
When last I saw thy young blue eyes they smiled
And then we parted — not as now we part —
But with a hope. ——

Awaking with a start
The Waters heave around me — and on high
The Winds lift up their voices: — I depart —
Whither I know not — but the hour's gone by
When Albion's lessening shores could grieve my gazing
eye. —

Page from MS.BM, the Scrope Berdmore Davies Notebook, containing Byron's fair copy of Childe Harold Canto Three.

CHILDE HAROLD CANTO THREE: REWRITING READING

When Byron's celebrity turned sour, he returned to the poem that had made him famous in the first place. But by adding another canto to *Childe Harold* he wasn't trying to win over his erstwhile admirers by recalling his past success. Returning to the scene of his first triumph enabled him to enact his intense dissatisfaction with the ways of reading that characterised his celebrity. In Canto Three he reworked the hermeneutic of intimacy, experimenting with other possibilities for reading and the possibility of doing without reading altogether. Byron rewrote the nexus of reader and writer in his poem and rethought it in his compositional and commercial practices. Presenting his contumely for consumption, he staged his rejection of the prior model of reading. Producing possible alternatives, he inscribed two divergent models of the reader/writer nexus in the poem. This chapter will elaborate those two experimental models, setting them in apposition to the textual manoeuvres and legal wrangles involved in the breakdown of Byron's marriage. It will show how he underlined them when he adjusted his writing habits after leaving England, and when he sold the copyright to Murray. And it will suggest that neither model provided Byron with a workable alternative to the hermeneutic of intimacy.

Firstly, he threw his celebrity back in the faces of those who bestowed it – his readers – by imagining a kind of poetry that would be all-in-all sufficient; that would need no reader to justify or complete its existence because its value would lie in its effect on the poet at the moment of its creation. In this model, Byron could only imagine being read on condition that his subjectivity completely overpowered that of the reader. Secondly, he substituted his daughter Ada for the generic figure of Ianthe. He addresses Ada at the beginning and end of the canto, inscribing another alternative model of reading. Her reading is deferred until after Byron's death, shifting the moment at which the poem achieves its purpose into the future and from the control of the writer to the control of one special reader. Here, he imagined a reading so perfect that his meaning would be completely understood. These two models of the reader/writer nexus are

both fantasies; the first is a fantasy of domination and the second is a fantasy of compassion. While the poem never reconciles these two models, they both represent attempts to publicly renounce the publicity-seeking hermeneutic of intimacy that first appeared in its earlier cantos.

Both new models defend Byron against Barthesian readings that "cannot [...] work with 'respect' to the text" but prefer "*manhandling* the text, *interrupting* it."[1] Barthes rewrote reading not as the passive reception of authorial messages but as a signifying practice always in some sense libidinal and involving an element of symbolic violence. "[W]hat I enjoy in a narrative," he wrote, "is not directly its content or even its surface, but rather the abrasions I impose upon the fine surface: I read on, I skip, I look up, I dip in again."[2] Barthes distinguished the *writerly* text, which can be actively rewritten by the reader from the *readerly* text, which can only be passively received.[3] David Simpson employs a comparable binary with greater historical specificity, opposing "irony" to "authority".[4] He asserts that Romantic poetics cultivated heuristic methods, which liberated readers to produce their own meanings, but continually fell into authoritarian didacticism. Although Barthes' analysis downplays historical factors, he connects the readerly text's dominance with consumer culture – which he

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[1] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. by Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), p. 15. Wolfgang Iser provides a more conciliatory account of the reader/writer nexus in which the text opens spaces in which author and reader collaborate in producing meanings. I used Iser to help characterise Byron's relationship with his readers in *The Giaour*, and I intend the shift from Iser to Barthes in this chapter to register the way in which that relationship becomes strained in 1816.

[2] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. by Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1973, repr. 1975), pp. 11-12.

[3] He also used other terms: the *Text*, endlessly under construction, was set against the *work*, completed and sealed against creative reading; and the subversive *text of bliss* was opposed to the *text of pleasure* cultivated by a bourgeois academy. For the terms *readerly* and *writerly* see *S/Z*, p. 4. For the terms *work* and *Text* see 'From Work to Text' (1971) repr. in *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*, ed. by Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh, 3rd ed. (London: Arnold, 1996), pp. 191-97. For the terms *text of pleasure* and *text of bliss* see *The Pleasure of the Text*, esp. p. 14.

[4] "Romantic poetry," he writes, "is organised to make us confront the question of authority, especially as it pertains to the contract between author and reader." David Simpson, *Irony and Authority in Romantic Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1979), xi. Simpson refers to Barthes only once, in a note (Simpson, p. 202). The note confirms that Simpson views the writerly as "heuristic or participatory", but expresses scepticism about Barthes' sense of its historical emergence. They share many concerns, however, and for the purposes of this chapter I will assume a working equivalence between their concepts which could be questioned if space allowed.

sees as turning readers into passive receptors of commodity-texts – and the rediscovery of the writerly text with resistance to that culture's hegemony.[5] Classic readerly texts are "products (and not productions)" whereas to read the *avant garde* writerly text one must learn "not to devour, to gobble, but to graze, to browse scrupulously, to rediscover – in order to read today's writers – the leisure of bygone readings: to be *aristocratic* readers."[6]

The thought that his readers might be writerly troubled Byron in 1816. Whereas his poems had previously invited speculation about his life, creating the personal fascination that was crucial to his celebrity, that scrutiny was now unwelcome. The two alternative models of reading he inscribed in *Childe Harold* Three resisted or circumscribed writerly elements. The first model aimed to produce a hermetically sealed *lisible* text that would be reader-proof, excluding the active responses of its consumers. The second tried to restrict the poem to a readership of one in order to guarantee a sympathetic reception. In texts such as *The Giaour* and 'To Ianthe' Byron had relied on the concealed use of new cultural technologies to persuade the reader that he was in some sense embodied in his poems and that those poems revealed things about their author, in order to make the text function as a relay of desire, offering access to a desired but inaccessible (and finally imaginary) pre-textual Byron. Byron's desire to escape the intrusive attention of the public in 1816 conflicted with his readers' desire for information about him, and the desires of editors, reviewers, reporters, cartoonists, pamphleteers, doggerel writers, satirists and moralists for whom Byron was by now stock in trade. These desires pressed all the more insistently because they were the same desires that he had manipulated to form the hermeneutic of intimacy, which enabled his celebrity. That hermeneutic became insupportable when the separation crisis alerted Byron

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[5] There are, of course, other labels that could be applied. Umberto Eco labels the writerly text, which invites the reader's contribution, the "open work" (Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, trans. by Anna Cancogni (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989)). Michel de Certeau theorises interventionist reading practices as "poaching" (Michel de Certeau, 'Reading as Poaching' in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 165-76).
[6] Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 5, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 13.

to the dangers of malicious misreading, driving him out of England and into a new relationship with his readers.

The acrimonious breakdown of Byron's marriage produced an enormous amount of text at the time, and has continued to do so ever since.[7] Moreover, the participants understood themselves to be engaged in producing texts. In fact, they understood that the separation would be defined by the texts in which it was recorded, and that the arguments they engaged in were arguments over what sort of texts would be produced, authored by whom and open to what kinds of reading. Byron's celebrity made him aware of the extent to which relationships may be mediated by texts, but the separation must have brought this home in a new and unsettling way. This was especially so given the almost total absence of orality in the procedures of the ecclesiastical courts, which handled separation cases. These courts relied on written statements, and appeared, I suggest, as producers of *readerly* texts. Both parties in the separation engaged in brinkmanship, threatening to go to court, but always holding back. "They think to drive me by menacing with legal measures" Byron wrote to Lord Holland:

> [L]et them go into court – they shall be met there. – – After what has been already said – they cannot be more anxious for investigation than myself.
>
> (BLJ V, 31)

The court is considered as a space in which the vagueness of Lady Byron's accusations will be reduced to specifics, and the strangeness of Byron's behaviour will be submitted to a legal definition of "cruelty" or a medical one of "insanity". The court presents itself, I contend, as a space in which meaning becomes determinate by being textualised. The law submits to a

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[7] See Samuel Chew, *Byron in England: His Fame and After-Fame* (London: John Murray, 1924), especially 'The Pamphlets of the Byron Separation', pp. 19-26. Further speculation about the separation remains a feature of writing on Byron, including Benita Eisler's biography, which suggests that Byron may have attempted to rape Lady Byron shortly after her confinement. Eisler, p. 479. See also the imaginary dialogue between Annabella and Augusta in David Crane, *The Kindness of Sisters* (London: Harper Collins, 2002). With such a tangled history of revelation and counter-revelation, it's only our insatiable appetite for scandal, and the tantalising impression that the real, real truth is just about to emerge, that stops discussion of the separation reaching saturation point.

definite judicial interpretation; ambiguity, slippage and free play are shut down, definitions established and applied. Grey areas resolve to the black and white of guilty or not guilty. Accusations become texts and texts become readerly. Actual divorce, in the modern sense of dissolving the marriage, was almost a legal impossibility, but couples could obtain a court order for separation "from bed and board".[8] The ecclesiastical courts required Lady Byron's lawyers, technically acting on behalf of her father, since a wife could not act in law independently of her husband, to submit a document called a libel, which stated clearly the precise charges against Byron. Such a document was actually drawn up, but it was never served, and was destroyed.[9] The court did not call witnesses, but collected *written* statements. A court officer twice examined witnesses in private, firstly to make their depositions and secondly to answer written questions submitted by the other side. A notary wrote down their answers, and no cross-questioning took place.[10]

Lady Byron never insisted that they go to court, partly because she was placed in a very weak legal position by the court's reluctance to grant separations and the high standards of proof demanded, combined with the impossibility of acting for herself, and the laws which gave a husband control over his wife's property and automatic custody of his children.[11] It was therefore in her interests to get a private separation agreement.[12] Coming to

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[8] For a fascinating legal analysis of the separation, written, refreshingly, with Stephen Lushington as its main concern, see S. M. Waddams, *Law, Politics and the Church of England: The Career of Stephen Lushington 1782-1873* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 100-34.

[9] Waddams, pp. 106-07.

[10] Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 196.

[11] The court felt it was in the public interest to keep the laws on separation strict. Sir William Scott, who was judge of the London Consistory Court in 1816, had ruled in a judgement in 1790 that "The general happiness of the married life is secured by its indissolubility [...] Necessity is a powerful master in teaching the duties which it imposes [...] the happiness of some individuals must be sacrificed to the greater and more general good." Cited in Waddams, p. 103. The ecclesiastical courts also had a very high standard of proof. They demanded two witnesses to establish a fact, and would not admit one of the parties involved in the case as a witness (i.e. in separation cases, the husband, wife or lover). Stone, p. 197, Waddams, p. 107.

[12] She was also concerned that the texts produced in court proceedings would not be readerly enough. She wrote that Byron "pique[d] himself" on his equivocations and worried that "this ambiguity of Language will avail him in the Law". Cited in Malcolm Elwin, *Lord Byron's Wife*, p. 400.

that agreement involved producing a variety of *writerly* texts, which compromised Byron's sense of control over textual meanings and made him acutely aware of the possibility of malicious misreadings. The practical concerns of his separation illuminate his abstract concern in *Childe Harold* Canto Three with the possibility, or impossibility, of being correctly understood. Drawing up a deed of separation and the legalistic correspondence that surrounded it meant a wrangle over textual meaning and interpretation. Lord and Lady Byron had been writer and reader before they met, and their separation made them and their advisors co-authors and readers of the separation document. Both parties kept each other's letters with a view to producing them in court if necessary, and the mass of correspondence that the separation generated was always potentially subject to public exegesis. Every letter was a possible legal weapon. Byron added a thorny postscript to one of his letters expressing his frustration and distress at the possibility of uncontrollable readings:

> P.S. – As I do not write with a lawyer at my elbow – I must request a fair construction of what I have written.
>
> (BLJ V, 47)

For Lady Byron, the problem was equally acute, and later became chronic as she amassed an enormous archive designed to vindicate her.[13] Drawing up written statements that could not be used against her, and a favourable deed of separation, meant trying to maintain maximum control over the possible construction of the words she employed; defending them against the symbolic violence of a Barthesian reading.

In her advisor Stephen Lushington, Annabella found a master of legal writing who could take account of both generous and malicious readings and deploy ambiguity and equivocation in his client's favour. On 22 February

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[13] This is the Lovelace archive, from which Ralph, Earl of Lovelace, produced *Astarte*. Lovelace was Byron's grandson, and was brought up by his grandmother, Lady Byron. Highly selective and polemical in his use of the archive material, he attempted to vindicate Lady Byron and show that incest was the hidden crime of the separation. The contents of the archive were subsequently made more fully available by Malcolm Elwin's research. See Ralph Milbanke, Earl of Lovelace, *Astarte: A Fragment of Truth Concerning George Gordon Byron, Sixth Lord Byron* (London: the author, 1905; repr., ed. by Mary Countess of Lovelace, London: Christophers, 1921).

1816, she revealed to Lushington a secret grievance so unspeakable that we still don't know what it was. Lushington understood that power lies in controlling the circulation of knowledge as much as simply possessing it, and he refused to reveal either what Lady Byron said to him, or what charges would be brought against Byron were the case to go to court. He produced instead a series of writerly texts, which invited their readers actively to engage in producing possible meanings. Byron complained bitterly about this to his wife:

> On the charges preferred against me – I have *twice* been refused any information by your father & his advisers: – it is now a fortnight – which has been passed in suspense – in humiliation – in obloquy – exposed to the most black and biting calumnies of every kind: – without even the power of contradicting conjecture & vulgar assertion as to the accusations – because I am denied the knowledge of all and any particulars, from the only quarter that can afford them – in the mean time I hope your ears are gratified by the general rumours.
>
> (BLJ V, 27)

By indicating that they knew Byron to be guilty of scandalous crimes, crimes which they declined to make explicit, Lady Byron and her advisers triggered endless unauthorised active readings, which she would neither confirm nor deny. Instead, she produced an exemplary writerly text, asserting that "the various reports injurious to Lord Byron's character [...] have certainly not originated with or been spread by those most nearly connected with her".[14] That was entirely beside the point – not only did they not need to spread the rumours, it was precisely because they remained silent in public that the rumours flourished and multiplied. This legalistic to-ing and fro-ing alerted Byron to the impossibility of guaranteeing a "fair construction", even while his postscript acknowledged that meanings must be construed as well as intended.

The fact that the separation proceedings avoided the readerly texts of the ecclesiastical courts and produced the writerly texts of a private agreement destabilised Byron's established model of the reader/writer

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[14] Cited in Crompton, p. 225, see also Marchand, II, 588, although Marchand does not print the statement.

nexus. The hermeneutic of intimacy became unsustainable in 1816 because Byron became newly aware of the risk of malicious misreading. What looked to Roland Barthes like "the birth of the reader" looked to Byron like "conjecture and vulgar assertion". The relationship between reader and writer now seemed less like an intimate connection and more like a struggle for control over the text's meanings. Byron produced one formally innovative response to this situation by trying to re-establish an intimate hermeneutic in *Manfred*. As Byron's first closet drama, *Manfred* inhabits a liminal public/private world, resisting the intervention of theatre professionals who would produce a determinate production over which Byron would have only limited control.[15] Instead, it preserves a private scene of reading in which Byron can perform his own mental theatre for each individual reader, as Philip Martin suggests:

> For by banning its performance, the acting implicit in the text is preserved as his own. To the reader accustomed to identifying the heroes of Byron's poetry with Byron himself, *Manfred*, by proposing a wholly new and fundamentally dramatic relationship between author and reader, transforms the poet into the actor: the drama presents Byron as Kean, fully responsible for the representation of the leading role.[16]

Childe Harold Canto Three, to which I now turn in more detail, responds to the same concerns by imagining alternative models of reading, rewriting the reader/writer nexus in order publicly to insist on Byron's distaste for public celebrity.

Byron's first tactic is to write his readers out of the poem altogether, producing a readerly text which is hermetically sealed against them. Whereas the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* manifested a concern about their audience, a troubled uncertainty about how and by whom they would be received, the third canto performs a repudiation of

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[15] *Manfred* can, it seems, only appear on stage once it's been mutilated. At Sadler's Wells in 1863, Manfred was crushed to death under an avalanche in the final scene, and at the Princess's Theatre in 1873 the producers felt the play would benefit from an interpolated ballet of female chamois hunters. See Margaret J. Howell, *Byron Tonight: A Poet's Plays on the Nineteenth Century Stage* (Windlesham: Springwood Books, 1982), pp. 97-120.
[16] Martin, Byron, p. 116.

audience, claiming that its reception is an extraneous and unimportant adjunct and that its highest purpose begins and ends with its creator. The fact that the poem was published at all indicates that Byron was able to manage this moment of crisis by transforming it into the performance of crisis, employing what Sheila Emerson calls a "typically Byronic desperation measure: that is, [...] Byron's carefully measured use of desperation."[17] At the end of the canto Byron claims to reject fame as "the thirst of youth", which he has grown out of (3. 112). He is not "so young as to regard men's frown or smile, / As loss or guerdon of a glorious lot" (3. 112). At the beginning he imagines fame as the inevitable but misguided pursuit of the young and the restless:

> Who can contemplate Fame through clouds unfold
> The star which rises o'er her steep, nor climb?
>
> (3. 11)

In this image fame is a mountain which tempts the aspirant, not to its summit, but to something unattainably numinous beyond itself. The pursuit of fame, Byron suggests, is the displaced pursuit of a more existentially satisfying and elevated goal. But this goal can never be reached by aiming for fame. No one gets to a star by climbing a mountain. Faced with the possibility that fame was about to desert him, Byron was determined to announce that he no longer cared for fame anyway, and that in fact (contrary to all appearances) he never had.

At Lady Jersey's party in 1816, at the height of the separation scandal, Byron had suffered the social mortification of being cut by the same people who had earlier wooed him.[18] Determined to cut them in turn, he set out in *Childe Harold* Three to deny the idea that readers complete poems. Rather, he asserts, poems need encounter no one except the poet, whose ecstatic experiences of intensity they both enable and record. They need have no existence beyond their moment of creation, since they exhaust their

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[17] Sheila Emerson, 'Byron's "One Word": The Language of Self-Expression in *Childe Harold* III', *Studies in Romanticism*, 20, no. 3 (1981), repr. in *Lord Byron: Modern Critical Views*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), pp. 117-32 (p. 127).
[18] Marchand, II, 598-99.

usefulness for the poet not through a process of writing and rewriting, reading and rereading, but at the instant of their springing full-grown into being. Effectively banished from England, Byron embraces the pattern of Coriolanus and banishes readers from his conception of poetry.[19] This new poetic pose operates partly as a defence against Byron's sense of self-belatedness, the worry that his best work is behind him and that he cannot possibly live up to expectations:

> Since my young days of passion – joy, or pain,
> Perchance my heart and harp have lost a string,
> And both may jar: it may be, that in vain
> I would essay as I have sung to sing.
>
> (3. 4)

"To feel / We are not what we have been, and to deem / We are not what we should be," he goes on, "is a stern task of soul" (3. 111). Byron counters the risk that his poem will "jar" with the public by presenting poetry not as a public performance, but as a palliative, a Tennysonian narcotic and a refuge from public performance:

> Yet, though a dreary strain, to this I cling;
> So that it wean me from the weary dream
> Of selfish grief or gladness – so it fling
> Forgetfulness around me – it shall seem
> To me, though to none else, a not ungrateful theme.
>
> (3. 4)

Even if no one but Byron benefits from this "dreary" poem, he will still value it for the emotional effects it produces in him. He signals this stance right from the epigraph, "Afin que cette application vous forçât à penser à autre chose" [So that this effort will force you to think about something else], where the poem is seen as primarily a diversion from the pain of the separation – a trauma that is too well known to be named.

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[19] Byron referred to the scene in which Coriolanus is banished from Rome (III. 3) in two letters dated 8 February 1816. To Hobhouse he wrote, "I mean to go abroad the moment packages will permit. – – 'There is a world beyond Rome'" (BLJ V, 24) and he corrected the quotation when writing to Samuel Rogers, "But no matter – 'there is a world elsewhere' & I will cut my way through this as I can" (BLJ V, 25). G. Wilson Knight asserts that "Byron certainly left London in the mood of Coriolanus leaving Rome, or Dante Florence." G. Wilson Knight, *Byron and Shakespeare* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 198.

To support this public claim for the poem's private value, Byron produces his most sustained description of society as a "peopled desart" (3. 73). The "hum / Of human cities [is] torture" to the poet (3. 72), and he imagines all society as systemically malicious, constraining and coercive, in what the *Christian Observer* called "a long and unmerciful philippic against all social converse with his species" (RR II, 599). Walter Scott expressed concern that this "desperate degree of misanthropy" would "end either in actual insanity or something equally frightful."[20] To "join the crushing crowd" is for Byron to be "doom'd to inflict or bear" (3. 71). All social relations are here reduced to the exchange of wrong for wrong, and the worst way of all to engage society is as a writer, as Byron punningly asserts, "mingling with the herd had penn'd me in their fold" (3. 68). Society demands that Childe Harold "yield dominion of his mind / To spirits against whom his own rebell'd", but instead of submitting, Harold finds a way to "breathe without mankind", which is what Byron aims to do with his new poem (3. 12). Turning his back on society, Byron claims to value his poem not as a medium of communication, but as an experience for the poet, not as a public engagement but as a private event. He asserts this conviction in the famous sixth stanza:

> 'Tis to create, and in creating live
> A being more intense, that we endow
> With form our fancy, gaining as we give
> The life we image, even as I do now.
>
> (3. 6)

These lines evacuate all moments but the moment of creation, the "now" of the poet's pen on the page in the fourth line, they discard all effects the poem produces that are not effects on the poet and they value above all the poem's ability to produce intensity. Byron cancelled the words "better" and "brighter" before he hit on "intense", rejecting both a moral judgement and a metaphorically visible effect in favour of a fiercely personal concentration of experience.[21] He returned to that word again in stanza eighty-nine to describe a mystic moment of stillness:

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[20] Walter Scott to Joanna Baillie, 26 November 1816, cited in Rutherford, p. 84.
[21] CPW II, 78, apparatus.

All heaven and earth are still: From the high host
Of stars, to the lull'd lake and mountain coast,
All is concentered in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and defence.

(3. 89)

Here the speaker becomes hypersensitive to perceptions; at the centre of his own universe he gains an expanded consciousness and a numinous clarity, which he expresses with traces of Wordsworthian "one-life" pantheism and Christian orthodoxy.[22] But such epiphanic intensity is experienced "in solitude, when we are *least* alone", and the reader has no place here (3. 90). The second person plural in stanza six excludes the reader from the poet's experience even as it suggests that that experience is not unique. Either it means "each of us severally and individually" or it means "we poets (but not you readers)".

Byron's attempt to produce a readerly text, to which the reader added nothing, was a calculated move within the literary public sphere, not an exit from it. There was no question of producing genuinely private texts as he did in his 1813-14 journal or in the poems that he burnt at that time.[23] Byron isn't literally managing without the public, but very publicly telling them that he can manage without them. The irony is that, as his writing appears more nakedly personal and evidently domestic, with increased use of the first person pronoun and more regular references to his public profile, Byron effectively intensifies the hermeneutic of intimacy in the act of staging his repudiation of it. His rejection of reading must be read if it is to have any bite, as Jerome Christensen suggests:

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[22] In the line before this quotation, Byron almost quotes Wordsworth: "thoughts too deep: – " (3. 89). Cf. 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' (203-04). Cf. also Byron's 'Prometheus' (1816), where Prometheus' wilful spirit finds even in punishment "Its own concentr'd recompense" (57) CPW IV, 31.

[23] We should make a distinction between Byron's journal of November 1813 to April 1814 (BLJ III, 204-58), which I have suggested is an attempt to replace public poetry with private prose, and the Alpine Journal which he wrote for Augusta in September 1816 (BLJ V, 96-105) which is a semi-public document, intended to circulate among Byron's acquaintance in England.

> The Byronic text begins as the "I"'s insistence on a relative autonomy from the text that, subsequent to its separation from the social world of face-to-face encounter, is in fact the only vehicle by which the "I" can appear.[24]

Byron escapes the threat of moody solipsism by staging his solipsism and performing his moods, and while he tells his audience that he needs no audience, he still needs an audience to tell. In fact, the poem was eagerly awaited and commercially successful, and Murray was able to report to Byron in December 1816 that he had sold seven thousand copies at a bookseller's dinner.[25] On one hand determined to do without the consolations of celebrity and on the other content to be celebrated for rejecting them, Byron told his audience that he didn't care about their applause, and they applauded.

Alongside this effort to manage without readers altogether, reducing their presence to an extraneous addition or afterthought, Byron attempted to enforce his readers' passivity by elaborating a model of the relationship between reader and writer in which the reader would be completely overcome by the poet's forceful self-expression. This is the first of two visions of reading that I identify in the canto, expressed as two versions of ideal communication and framed in two startling stanzas.[26] Since such a one-sided transaction between reader and writer could never in fact take place, Byron sought to make a triumph out of his failed attempt. He produced a fantasy of self-expression so powerful that it would entirely negate the reader's subjectivity and force the writer's meaning upon him or her with the elemental power of lightning:

> Could I embody and unbosom now
> That which is most within me, -- could I wreak
> My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
> Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
> All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
> Bear, know, feel, and yet breathe -- into *one* word,
> And that one word were Lightning, I would speak;

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[24] Christensen, *Lord Byron's Strength*, p. 153.
[25] Smiles, I, 369. Murray sold seven thousand copies of *The Prisoner of Chillon* the same evening.
[26] Stanzas 97 and 114, discussed below. Both were written late in the poem's composition.

But as it is, I live and die unheard,
With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword.

(3. 97)

This laments Byron's failure to produce a poem concentrated into a single word so loaded with force and meaning that it would compel understanding. The reader would not be able to resist the poet's intended meaning. This stanza picks up from 'Kubla Khan', which Byron had urged Coleridge to publish, the Romantic topos of an imaginable but regrettably unwritable poem whose extraordinary descriptive or expressive power would assert its author's preternatural or vatic attributes.[27] Describing the failure to write such a poem is understood to provide hints of its brilliance and to leave the failing poet with the trace of the powers he is unable to actualise. In this stanza, it seems that if the ideal of a poem that needs no readers cannot be sustained, then Byron is prepared to admit readers to his poem only on condition that his stormy self-expression overcomes them entirely. "Wreak" suggests aggression and incorporates its archaic meaning, "to avenge".[28] The lightning metaphor images a poetry that produces instantaneous illumination in the reader, with no hermeneutic lag, no need for the reader to actively construct or reconstruct the poem's meaning. The elemental double-edged force of electricity, both destructive and creative, would power such poetry. Electricity was still mysterious in the Romantic period, associated with both Revolution and the primal life-force and featured in spectacular demonstrations as part of Humphry Davy's fashionable lectures.[29] This stanza conjures the possibility of a poetry that not only describes the natural sublime, but harnesses sublime power to enforce its signification. What Byron has to express, but cannot, is a "sword" sheathed instead of used. This figures the self-expression that Byron can't achieve as an assault on the reader's consciousness, and even – given the patently phallic image – a rape.

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[27] Coleridge asked Byron to use his influence to help him get a publisher for a volume of poems, and it was through Byron's intercession that Murray published 'Kubla Khan'. See BLJ IV, 285-86.
[28] OED sense 5.
[29] See the entry for "electricity" in McCalman, p. 495.

This is a model of the writer/reader nexus as a site of struggle in which the writer aspires to dominate the reader by the force of his subjectivity, expressed with symbolic violence, and to claim exclusive control over the poem's meanings. It reverses Barthes' sense that reading can do violence to the text by picturing the text as an assault on the reader.[30] Daniel Watkins, producing an "investigation of romanticism and sexual violence", has examined Romantic examples of what he calls "sadeian logic"; the idea derived from the writings of the Marquis de Sade that a subject is empowered only by thoroughly subjugating another's subjectivity. He writes:

> My concern is not so much with the particular narratives of Sade or with the expressions of hope or despair – or sexual violence – in individual romantic texts; it is, rather, with the historical and cultural logic that came to maturation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with the final political, economic and ideological victories of the bourgeoisie and that, I believe, helps to shape in fundamental ways sadeian and romantic cultural expression. That logic, put simply, is held in place by the common assumption that human identity necessarily arises from one person's absolute domination of another.[31]

Watkins, surprisingly, does not mention Byron in his study, despite the fact that Byron is the only canonical Romantic known to have read Sade. When Lady Byron broke open one of Byron's trunks looking for evidence that he was mad in 1816, according to Hobhouse, she found a copy of *Justine*.[32] If something called "sadeian logic" is identifiable in British Romanticism, then it may be used to focus the relationship between reader and writer imagined in this stanza. The "Lightning" of Byron's self-assertive self-expression, perhaps recalling for him the lightning bolt that kills Justine, negates the reader's subjectivity and brings a fulfilment to the poet which, given the phallic image of the sword and the orgasmic intensity of the imagined expression, comes with an erotic shadow.

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[30] According to Jerome Christensen, "Byron modernises Napoleonic domination into an invisible, gentler, symbolic violence". Christensen, *Lord Byron's Strength*, p. 172.
[31] Daniel P. Watkins, *Sexual Power in British Romantic Poetry* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1996), p. 8.
[32] Marchand, I, 559.

The reviewers – usually the spikiest of readers – bear witness to the power of this fantasy of domination. The *Belle Assemblé* was completely overcome, and reduced to writing that Byron's poetry "bids defiance to criticism, and all comments on his works, the merit of which speaks for them, would be vain and useless" (RR I, 104). The *Portfolio* noted that "Lord Byron seeks to gain an ascendancy over the judgement of the public" (RR V, 1967-68). And John Wilson, surveying Byron's career while reviewing the final canto for the *Edinburgh Review*, observed:

> So that he command [his readers'] feelings and passions, he cares not for their censure or their praise, – for his fame is more than mere literary fame; and he aims in poetry, like the fallen chief whose image is so often before him, at universal dominion, we had almost said, universal tyranny, over the minds of men.
>
> (RR II, 899-900)

But this was a fantasy of domination and not, finally, a bid to dominate. Byron lamented the impossibility of emptying out his reader's subjectivity and flooding it with his own self-expression, even while he indulged the consolations of imagining it. Some readers, such as the reviewer for the *British Critic*, resisted the power of Byron's self-assertion. "The noble Lord" he complained "is ever informing us how vastly superior both he and his genius are [...] we now begin to call for proof, and all the proof we can find is in his own assertion" (RR I, 266). The impossibility of actualising such forceful self-expression also had its consolations, as Sheila Emerson has observed. She notes that this stanza ambiguously suggests that complete self-expression might destroy Byron, and that by finding it impossible he "criticizes a way of life and of writing which would provide him with no escape from his tempestuous emotions."[33] The advantage of failing to fully express himself, Emerson suggests, is that Byron sustains the fascinating mystery of his concealed selfhood. Byron preserved the mystery of his identity, but was denied the mastery of his audience, which he fantasised even as he acknowledged the impossibility of such domination.

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[33] Emerson, p. 125.

This attempt to imagine a kind of poetry which needs no readers or else admits them only on condition of their submission is not the canto's only model of the reader/writer nexus. It cannot be the only model, because in spite of Byron's claims to self-sufficiency, there is still one reader worth having; one whom he cannot do without and whom he has no wish to dominate. Ada. In a second calculated rewriting of the writer/reader nexus, her reading is presented as active, responsive and sympathetic, and Byron's poem is correspondingly presented as open, writerly and awaiting completion. *Childe Harold* Canto Three therefore compasses two opposed models of reading. The thought that Ada will read *Childe Harold* Three in the future reinstates the idea of the poem as a medium of communication and stretches it out in time, extending it from the moment of writing to the moment of reading, rather than concentrating it into an imagined instant of composition. The fractured first stanza mimics Byron's separation from Ada and establishes the poem not as inward-turned and self-centred but as outward-looking and interpersonal. It travels through space from Continental Europe to England and from poet's pen via publisher's page to reader's consciousness, and preserves words through time to be reanimated by reading at a later date. Ada's existence means that, whatever the consolations of composition, Byron needs his works to be read after all, if only by her. He figures his poem as a gift and a message from father to daughter:

> Albeit my brow thou never should'st behold,
> My voice shall with thy future visions blend,
> And reach into thy heart, – when mine is cold, –
> A token and a tone, even from thy father's mould.
>
> (3. 115)

Although Byron's relationship with Ada is a "broken claim" and he's compelled to be an absent father, he makes the poem his legacy to her, and makes her the only reader who matters (3. 117). Her writerly reading "blends" the "voice" of her father, preserved on the page, with the alliterated "visions" of her own imagination, producing a complete poem through a collaborative effort. She draws Byron out of his self-absorption and absorbs

all his attention herself, "I see thee not, – I hear thee not, – but none / Can be so wrapt in thee" (3. 115).

But presenting the poem as a message from father to daughter did not make it a private communiqué. Any message Byron sent to Ada had to go through the public domain whether he liked it or not, because Lady Byron's antipathy ensured that all other channels were closed. His name was "shut from thee, as a spell still fraught / With desolation" (3. 117), and no message could be sent via Augusta, since Lady Byron was still nurturing what she described as "an insurmountable repugnance to Ada's being in [Augusta's] company" in November 1818.[34] Given his financial situation, his separation from her and her close supervision by Lady Byron, the only legacy Byron was in a position to leave Ada was his poem. Doing so meant producing a text that could be called writerly, but not in a sense that Roland Barthes would recognise. Opening his text to one uniquely sympathetic individual, Byron is prepared to relinquish full control over his significations only while entrusting his words to a reader made from the same mould as he is. While Byron's corpse moulders, he ensures his survival by moulding his ideal reader. Ada is not a reader born at the cost of the death of the author, but, literally and metaphorically, the author's "child of love" (3. 118). Addressing poems to (often female) idealised readers is a recurrent Romantic defence against the uncertainties of addressing an enlarged and anonymous reading public, as Dorothy Wordsworth, Sara Hutchinson and Maria Gisborne could attest. Ada figures in *Childe Harold* Three in distinctive ways because she replaces Ianthe in the poem's internally conflicted self-imaginings and helps to displace the hermeneutic of intimacy. Imagining her reading means indulging a second fantasy of perfect communication: a fantasy of compassion.

Ada appears as a reader so genuine and generous that there is no chance of misreading. Whilst on one hand he dismisses "the world", as his

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[34] Lady Byron to Mrs Villiers, 11 November 1818, cited in Malcolm Elwin, *Lord Byron's Family: Annabella, Ada and Augusta 1816-1824* (London: John Murray, 1975), p. 180.

model of poetic self-sufficiency demands, on the other hand Byron keeps hold of the dream of a perfect reader:

> I have not loved the world, nor the world me, –
> But let us part fair foes; I do believe,
> Though I have found them not, that there may be
> Words which are things, – hopes which will not deceive,
> And virtues which are merciful, nor weave
> Snares for the failing: I would also deem
> O'er other's griefs that some sincerely grieve;
> That two, or one, are almost what they seem, –
> That goodness is no name, and happiness no dream.
>
> (3. 114)

This is a credo of embattled optimism linked to an ideal of reading. L. E. Marshall describes it as "a declaration of faith in the identity of idealising words and actual things."[35] It imagines a reading so sympathetic and perfectly attuned to the poet's meanings that words pass between poet and reader as "things"; tokens exchanged without loss, like the "token" that Byron imagines his poem will be for Ada in the next stanza. It's a hard-won consolation, as the extremely circumspect diction suggests ("some", "two, or one", "almost"). As with the previous model of reading, this is a fantasy of perfect communication, but whereas the first model imagined an expression so forceful it would guarantee understanding, this model imagines a reader so keenly responsive and a language so perfectly referential that a message can be transmitted with no interference, no noise. In this ideal there is a perfect fit between the writer's intention and the reader's construction. They both grasp the words in exactly the same way as a result of the reader's generosity and emotional sympathy. This is made possible by a language imagined as reliably referential. Goodness is "no name" because the word is not detached from its referent, but can be consistently applied to reality.[36] Although Byron has not yet found such a reading, Ada's future encounter

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[35] L. E. Marshall, '"*Words* are *Things*": Byron and the Prophetic Efficacy of Language', *SEL*, 25 (1985), 801-22 (p. 818).

[36] Cf. Marshall's commentary, "the poet wishes to maintain the reality of hope, virtue, sympathy, sincerity, goodness, and happiness – words which may be things, not merely names or dreams – in a world which inspires no confidence in their existence, and in which such abstractions have become discredited figures of speech." Ibid.

with the poem underwrites the dream of perfect communication in the face of all evidence to the contrary.

Byron drives his point home by implying that the possibility of Ada's perfectly sympathetic reading is defined against Lady Byron's copious display of the contrary inclination. While he idealises Ada, he anathematises his wife by implication. With the acrimonious collapse of Byron's family even a gesture of love seemed to imply a gesture of hatred from another perspective. Reprising the passive-aggressive manoeuvre of 'Fare Thee Well' within this larger context, Byron's wistful optimism and apparent magnanimity works by tacitly delineating Lady Byron's faults. She is understood to be so mercilessly self-righteous that her "virtues" are "snares" which wait to trap and condemn others, in whose "griefs" she takes a hypocritical delight. The discourse of proscriptive virtue that shapes Lady Byron has no connection with the reality of goodness as Byron experiences it. He looks forward to a future vindication when Ada will recognise Lady Byron's viciousness and Byron's generosity of spirit. Positioning himself as the wronged party, and Ada as the only one who'll understand, Byron writes a second model of the reader/writer nexus, which contradicts the first. It imagines a true and generous reading, immediately after the separation crisis has provided plentiful examples of his readers' readiness to see things in the worst possible light.

Byron's attempts to remodel the relationship between reader and writer extended beyond the text of his poem to his compositional method and his handling of the work's copyright. While he rewrote the reader/writer nexus, he rethought his writing habits and therefore his relationship to the bookselling industry. Given Barthes' characterisation of the readerly text as an object for consumption, Byron's tactics should be seen in relation to a wider debate in the period over copyright and the nature of trade in intellectual or artistic property. What Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier call a Romantic "revolution in reading" can be seen in relation to three amendments to copyright law, which crystallised the commodity status of the

text and impacted on conceptions of authorship and literary work.[37] In 1774 the case of *Donaldson* v. *Becket* rejected the claim that an author had a common-law right to perpetual copyright, and limited the copyright holder's control over a work once it had entered the public domain. This legitimised the proliferation of cheap reprint editions of works whose copyright term had elapsed. Subsequent interpretation of the ruling stressed the author's proprietary relationship with his work, which was increasingly thought of as an alienable literary property. In 1814 an act of Parliament supported by Robert Southey extended the term of copyright to 28 years or the life of the author, whichever was longer. And in 1842 a further act supported by William Wordsworth extended the term of copyright to 60 years, making copyright a heritable property.[38] These are three legal milestones – at the beginning, middle and end of the Romantic period – in the history of textual commodification which Barthes associates with the dominance of the readerly text.[39]

Broadly speaking, Byron's characteristic compositional method prior to *Childe Harold* Canto Three was very rapidly to write the first draft of a poem and, after making minor changes, send it to Murray. He then

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[37] Cavallo and Chartier posit three "revolutions in reading". The first occurred in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, when silent reading became the norm and printing was invented. The second happened in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the industrialisation of printing placed readers, authors and texts into new relationships. The third revolution takes place when the proliferation of electronic text produces a further upheaval in reading practices. *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. by Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), pp. 22-29. John Frow comparably distinguishes between the invention of printing, which helps to commodify the *book* as a material object, the development of copyright law, which commodifies the *work*, and the contemporary possibility of commodifying *access* to electronically stored information. John Frow, 'Gift and Commodity', in his *Time and Commodity Culture: Essays in Cultural Theory and Postmodernity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 102-217 (p. 139).

[38] See Mark Rose, *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), esp. pp. 92-113.

[39] Against Barthes's reading of consumption as enforced passivity, some commentators argue for a sovereign consumer, empowered by the market. For example, Stephen Behrendt claims that "Romantic readers were increasingly *engaged* readers of texts of all sorts", and that "By the end of the Romantic period it is fair to say that the reader as *consumer* had arrived. This was a reader who shopped and selected, whose sensibilities had been sharpened by exposure to an increasingly wide range of materials, for which she or he had slowly begun to have more time because of advances in working conditions, domestic conditions and print technology." Stephen C. Behrendt, 'The Romantic Reader' in *A Companion to Romanticism*, ed. by Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 91-100 (p. 99).

bombarded Murray with additions and corrections, in a series of letters. Murray incorporated all this material, on Byron's instructions, into proof, when Byron would make further alterations and embellishments. After publication, the process of accretion would often extend through subsequent editions, most obviously in the case of *The Giaour*, a "snake of a poem" which "lengthen[ed] its rattles each month" (BLJ III, 100). This practice meant that Byron relied on Murray to help bring his poems to their published versions, and the first time Byron saw his poems as artefacts with any integrity was often in the first printed edition. For both practical and conceptual reasons, these habits were inappropriate for *Childe Harold* Three. The postal service between Switzerland and England was uncertain, especially through France, where "letters are rather more carefully investigated than delivered" (BLJ V, 78), which made it impractical to send corrections by letter, or to correct proofs and revises. More importantly, Byron's claim that he had written a poem which required no readers, or only one, was underwritten by the extent to which he turned his manuscript into a finished artefact *before* he sent it to Murray. Having composed his first draft on single sheets of paper, Byron then made a fair copy in a red morocco-bound notebook. The book had initially been used for keeping accounts, but once Byron had copied his poem into it, he cut all the other pages out. After he began using the book, Byron wrote two more short sequences of stanzas on separate sheets, and had them sewn into the notebook. He numbered the pages that contained the text of his poem from one to one hundred. He then made a few additions, sometimes written crosswise, and the poem was complete.[40] In a departure from his former method, Byron made no more additions or corrections before publication. As a result, the poem became embodied as an artefact with its own discreet integrity, before Murray's intervention, to an unusual extent in Byron's oeuvre. By cutting out some pages and sewing in others, Byron tried to make the poem appear complete and free-standing before sending it to the publisher. In this way, he

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[40] This is MS BM, or the Scrope Davies notebook, now in the British Library. For a full description of the book and facsimile of its contents, see *The Manuscripts of the Younger Romantics*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman, Lord Byron VII, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage Canto III: A Facsimile of the Autograph Fair Copy Found in the 'Scrope Davies' Notebook*, ed. by T. A. J. Burnett (New York: Garland, 1988).

concretised his claims that the poem's achievement was complete before it reached the eyes of the public, and that it was primarily a personal gift and not a public performance.

These ideas also affected his sale of the poem's copyright. Whereas Byron had previously refused all payment for his poems, presenting them as lordly gifts to his readers, he drove a hard bargain for the copyright of *Childe Harold* Canto Three. Murray offered fifteen hundred guineas for the poem in September 1816. Douglas Kinnaird, acting on Byron's behalf, declined this offer and pressed for two thousand, which Murray agreed to.[41] Murray flattered Byron, saying "The poem [...] is so much beyond anything in modern days that I may be out in my calculation: it requires an ethereal mind, like its author's, to cope with it."[42] But he also protected himself against piracy and drove home the point that he, and not Byron, now owned the poem, writing, "Remember I do stipulate for all the original MSS., copies or scraps."[43] Murray and Byron agreed that the final five hundred guineas should only be paid after Murray had sold an agreed number of poems, and in December and January Byron twice asked Kinnaird to chase Murray for payment: "give him a hint – & exact performance" (BLJ V, 139).[44] This was the first time that Byron had entered into negotiations over the sale of copyright, and it marks an important shift in the way he viewed his poems.[45]

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[41] Smiles, I, 367.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid. Byron arranged for three fair copies to guard against loss. One was Byron's notebook, described above. This was given to Scrope Davies to take back to England. One was made by Mary Shelley and stayed in Switzerland. One was made by Claire Clairmont and given to Percy Shelley to take to England, where it became the printer's copy (CPW II, 297-98). Byron wrote "I know not well to whom to consign the correction of the proofs [...] as I feel very anxious that it should be published with as few errata as possible" (BLJ V, 90). But once Murray had purchased the poem, the author's anxieties did not discourage him from editing it, as McGann notes: "Shelley clearly understood that he was authorized to correct the proofs. [...] But Murray wanted Gifford to edit the poem, not Shelley, whose politics he did not care for. So Murray ignored Shelley and relied on Gifford, in the mean time flattering B with his and Gifford's praises of the poem. Thus B was gradually led to accept Gifford as editor [...], and Shelley's position as B's agent was effectively circumvented. [...] Murray and Gifford carefully excised all the more radical political content in the notes, something which they knew Shelley would not have permitted" (CPW II, 299).
[44] For the agreement regarding the final £500, see BLJ V, 105-07. For Byron's second request that Kinnaird arrange payment of the money due, see BLJ V, 158.
[45] Murray paid £600 for the first two cantos of *Childe Harold* to Dallas, but Byron received no money (See Franklin, *A Literary Life*, pp. 18-19). Byron did accept 1000 guineas for

Initially seen as gifts to his publisher and through him to his readers, they now became the objects of a transaction, a commodity for which the public, through their representative Murray, must pay. Beginning with *Childe Harold* Three, as Caroline Franklin notes, "Byron drove hard bargains with his long-suffering publisher, as he now not only accepted but threw himself with gusto into the role of paid professional."[46] As Marcel Mauss suggests in his classic study of "archaic societies", gifts can entwine both giver and receiver in a complex reciprocity with social implications and temporal extension, which may involve a competitive element.[47] By transacting the copyright of *Childe Harold* Three, Byron attempts to reduce the reader/writer nexus to the cash nexus, removing from it any trace of a gift economy and making it an exchange which is imagined to be immediately complete, and to require no further contact between the parties.[48] This new attitude underwrites both of Byron's attempts to remodel the reader/writer nexus in the poem. On one hand, since the poem's value lies in the moment of composition Byron knows its worth and can bargain accordingly, rather than leaving it up to the reader to gauge its merit. On the other, because he declines to make a gift of the poem to the public, he reserves the possibility of making a gift of it to Ada. Taking care to distinguish gifts from transactions, Byron quarantines one against pollution by the other.[49]

By negotiating the sale of his poem's copyright, Byron suggested that it was a complete and saleable property, which his readers could consume or not as they chose, but to whose meanings they could not contribute. The *British Critic*, however, was determined to champion the consumer's rights.

Parisina and *The Seige of Corinth*, but only because he was in dire financial straits and after he first refused the money and then tried to give it away (Ibid. pp. 47-48).

[46] Ibid. p. 48.

[47] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. by W. D. Halls (New York: Norton, 1990).

[48] Cf. Christensen's discussion of the *British Review's* reading of *Don Juan*: "For the *British Review* critical independence is wedded to the commodification of the cultural artefact, which frees the purchasing critic from any reciprocal obligation to the selling poet. If things are bought and sold according to a contract arrived at in the open market, seller and buyer make no contact except through the abstracted medium of money, which, because it entails no consequences, emancipates economics from ethics." Christensen, *Lord Byron's Strength*, p. 227.

[49] For a theoretical discussion of these issues, see John Frow, 'Gift and Commodity' in his *Time and Commodity Culture*, pp. 102-217.

The critic insisted that Byron's attempts to play the market for poetry had subjected him to the laws of a harsh economy of writing, from which he could not claim to have escaped:

> The man who sends out into the world a single poem, the labour perhaps of years, may affect, with some pretence of probability, to scorn the voice of public censure or approbation, but he who, at intervals of only a few months, shall continue to court the expectations of the world with the successive fruits of his poetic talent, not only exists a pensioner upon public fame, but lives even from hand to mouth upon popular applause.
>
> (RR I, 266)

It would not be so easy, the critic was sure, for Byron to subsist without the approbation of his readers. Applying the language of political economy, he asserts the right of the reader as a sovereign consumer who will purchase only what tries to please him in an unregulated market. While Byron's decision to deal more directly with that market underlined his rejection of the established hermeneutic, the reviewing discourse of the market undermined his claims to autonomy.

Byron's attempts to refigure his relationship with his readers in *Childe Harold* Canto Three chart a crisis in the hermeneutic of intimacy. In a spasm of annoyance brought on by the malicious misreadings of the separation crisis, Byron rejected intimacy with the purchasing public as a reading paradigm. The more intimate you are, the more it hurts to be misunderstood. Writing *Childe Harold* Three, he found ways to perform this intense dissatisfaction with the public existence of the celebrity in front of the public audience that continued to make his celebrity function. The poem is a laboratory in which to experiment with alternatives to the hermeneutic of intimacy. It contains two conflicting ideas of the reader/writer nexus, linked to two fantasies of perfect communication. These are backed up by the way in which Byron adjusts his compositional practice and his dealings with his publisher to his new circumstances. But neither rejecting his audience wholesale nor identifying a single ideal reader, neither fantasising about his reader's submission nor her perfect sympathy, neither producing a poem which was a finished private artefact nor haggling over its price, enabled his

writing to inaugurate a workable alternative to the hermeneutic of intimacy; an alternative that would sustain his celebrity on new terms, that would guarantee his future public vindication or that would enable him to make his exit from the public sphere with a dignified flourish.

Juan opposing the entrance to the Spirit-room.

Published by J. Robins and Co. London, April 30, 1825.

Don Juan: Celebrity and the Subject of Modernity

Don Juan presents subjectivity in stubbornly un-modern ways, during the historical period when the emergent celebrity culture was helping to normalise modern ideas of subjectivity. In this chapter, I will suggest the role that celebrity played in the rise of modern subjectivity, assert that Byron's experience of celebrity led him to question the cost of establishing that norm, and examine *Don Juan*'s antagonistic refusal to conform to it. Modern subjectivity, of the kind that became normalised in the Romantic period, is the necessary, though not sufficient condition of celebrity. The apparatus of celebrity requires that its subject be constituted in ways that now seem so natural to readers of Byron that they look timeless and universal, but that are in fact specifically modern and obtained their natural appearance in the Romantic period. For readers accustomed to value realistic characters and narrative techniques *Don Juan* may appear to inhabit a realm of genial comedy lacking novelistic characterisation and narrative sophistication. By contrast, my reading of those elements reveals *Don Juan*'s moments of resistance, its attempts to think outside the norms of modern subjectivity at the last historical moments before their universality became unquestionable. Byron's dissatisfaction with his celebrity, I argue, makes him call into question the side effects and political collusions of modern ideas of subjectivity. He responds by shifting attention away from the increasingly normative emphases of those ideas.

The "rise" of a recognisably "modern" kind of subjectivity remains contentious. But most critics now accept that subjectivity has a history, and that people in different historical periods understood their subjectivity in quite different ways. To do so is not to admit a simple-minded social determinism, nor to suggest that selfhood exists *only* as a mirage constructed from cultural factors, but simply to acknowledge the historical diversity and specificity of the ways in which individuals imagine their individuality, while negotiating those discourses that would interpellate them. "In order to conjure the demon of anachronism," writes Charles Taylor, "we have to remind ourselves that the full modern question of identity belongs to the

post-Romantic period".[1] Despite our tendency to mis-recognise modern preoccupations in earlier periods, scholars agree that many modern ideas about the subject would have seemed eccentric in antiquity or in the medieval period, when personality, according to Gabrielle Spiegel, was treated as "a collection of attributes with more or less independent status."[2] Modern ideas of subjectivity emerged as one option in an unfinished debate in the early modern period, but were still "not obvious" according to Elizabeth Ermarth.[3] This early-modern diversity of conceptions about the self persisted into the Romantic period, as Andrea Henderson has emphasised, when the "modern" understanding of subjectivity became common sense.[4] This common-sense understanding has been continually elaborated since then, both in its increasing dominance of lay conceptions of subjectivity and through specialised professional discourses such as psychoanalysis. It was not until the advent of late modernity – where this chapter is heading, and where we find ourselves now – that those common-sense assumptions were challenged.

I will focus in turn on two aspects of modern subjectivity, which are central to how celebrity functions and how it constructs the subject that it publicises. Firstly, the modern subject's life is understood as a developmental narrative of rational action leading to progressive self-realisation. The subject is conceived as having temporal extension, being self-identical over time, but also as progressively developing, becoming more and more fully herself. This progressive self-realisation relies on the subject's ability prospectively and retrospectively to narrate his or her life,

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[1] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 184.
[2] Gabrielle Spiegel, 'Political Utility in Medieval Historiography: A Sketch', *History and Theory*, 14, no. 3 (1975), 319-21, cited in Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 8.
[3] "[The modern] conception of identity [is] so obvious to us that we have ceased to see it as the convention it is, but it was not obvious in the Renaissance, and it took a long time to become common sense." Ermarth, p. 5.
[4] "The Romantic era saw the production of a diversity of models for understanding subjectivity, a diversity that often goes unnoticed in our tendency to focus on the depth model, even when we challenge the depth model by revealing its ideological functions." Andrea K. Henderson, *Romantic Identities: Varieties of Subjectivity, 1774-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 3.

subsuming failures, transgressions and setbacks into episodes within a narrative arc of development. Wordsworth demonstrates this ability in *The Prelude*, when he re-imagines (for example) the boat-stealing incident as a milestone in the growth of a poet's mind. Following Alasdair MacIntyre's diagnosis of the condition of moral discourse in modernity, I understand this specifically modern understanding of development to be produced when earlier goals for the good life are displaced. The classical ideal of man-as-he-should-be, his *telos*, and the Christian doctrine of salvation as the soul's homecoming and highest aim, lose their normative force in modernity.[5] While modern individuals certainly may continue to experience ethical and religious imperatives, shared frameworks for self-government – whether civic or salvific – can no longer be assumed. Instead, individuals conceive themselves as progressively developing towards a privatised kind of self-fulfilment. They construct narratives from their lives in which they become more and more authentically and rewardingly themselves. Such an understanding answers what Anthony Cascardi describes as the modern difficulty "of imagining purposive and coherent possibilities for self-transformation where the ends of action are no longer fixed according to nature and where the terms of transcendence have been rendered suspect."[6]

Secondly, modern subjects understand themselves and each other to be structured around a hidden interior which pre-exists any form of expression but which is nonetheless legible to others, provided they are sufficiently attentive, sensitive and perspicacious. Readers who employed the hermeneutic of intimacy imagined that reading Byron's poems was an activity offering privileged access to this secret core of subjectivity. I focus here not on the depth effects that produce the modern conception of subjective inner space, but on the paradoxical qualities attributed to those depths. On one hand they are buried and hidden from view; on the other

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[5] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1985), esp. Chapter 5, 'Why the Enlightenment Project of Justifying Morality had to Fail', pp. 51-61.
[6] Anthony J. Cascardi, *The Subject of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 7.

hand they are continually being made legible to those who know how to read them properly. Literary critics have stressed the role of writing in establishing and normalising the subject of modernity. Romantic poetics locates the source of poetry deep in the poet's subjective interior, and novelistic realism may play a part in prescribing the reality, including the interior reality, that it describes. In this chapter I will contend that the phenomenon of celebrity had an equally important part to play in these transformations.

The apparatus's commercial character requires the celebrity subject to be developmentally narrativised and structured around a hidden yet legible interior. Celebrities must be modern subjects. When an individual conceived on this model of subjectivity is marketed through an industrial publishing and distribution infrastructure, the combination of subjectivity and technology produces a powerful force for normalising the subject of modernity. Byron's dissatisfaction with his celebrity was produced in part by his reluctance to understand his poetic career as a linear narrative of development, which I examined in my discussion of *Hebrew Melodies*, and his alienation from the market in interiority, which I considered in relation to *The Bride of Abydos*. This first-hand experience fed *Don Juan*, where Byron considered the costs involved in normalising the modern subject and performed a strategic reversal of the standard desiderata for writing about subjectivity. I will show how he presented non-developmental and illegible characters, refused to probe hidden depths and satirised the tendency to do so and, writing against the conception of subjectivity as consistently developmental and knowable, insisted on the irreducible contradictions and mobility of himself and of the world.[7]

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[7] By calling attention to the dialogic nature of *Don Juan*, Philip Martin warns against ascribing to the poem any stable position or consistent argument. See Philip Martin, 'Reading *Don Juan* with Bakhtin,' in *Don Juan*, ed. by Nigel Wood, Theory in Practice (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993), pp. 90-121. Refusing or disrupting normative ways of thinking is itself a kind of argument, however, and while it would be anathema to the poem systematically to elaborate any thesis, distinct and complex antagonisms recur throughout.

These priorities baffled his contemporaries more and more, including those, such as Hobhouse and Gifford, on whose judgement he had previously relied. Increasingly indifferent to the opinions of others, Byron was determined to follow a path which seemed to them worryingly idiosyncratic. T. G. Steffan notes that "Byron ordered Murray to send him no more ephemerae, periodicals, and poetic trash. Praise and censure interrupted the current of his mind. [...] He returned to Murray a *Quarterly Review* unopened."[8] William Blake, for whom being out of step with prevailing opinion held no fear, acknowledged this tendency when he dedicated *The Ghost of Abel* "To LORD BYRON in the Wilderness".[9] In the wilderness, Byron found a space of possibilities in which he could play with anti-modern ideas of subjectivity, unsettling his contemporaries by subjecting their commonsensical conceptions of the subject to a *verfremdung* effect.[10] But as modern subjectivity became normative, it increasingly seemed to be obvious, natural and unquestionable. Byron was attempting to think outside a discourse that worked by appearing to have no outside. The conventions of modern subjectivity claimed not to be conventions at all, but the absolute conditions of universal nature. In his effort to think outside the norms of modern subjectivity, Byron turned to an early-modern student of subjectivity: Montaigne.

Byron refers to Montaigne by name only once in *Don Juan*, where he cites Montaigne's authority in an important stanza on scepticism ("'Que sçais-je?' was the motto of Montaigne" (9. 17)). But he read Montaigne's *Essays* extensively, and he may have felt some affinity with the earlier writer. Both were aristocrats living in different sorts of retirement from a power

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[8] Truman Guy Steffan, *Byron's Don Juan*, 4 vols, I: *The Making of a Masterpiece* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1957), p. 59.
[9] William Blake, *The Ghost of Abel*, copy A (1822), pl. 1, *The William Blake Archive*, ed. by Morris Eaves, Robert N. Essick and Joseph Viscomi. Accessed 6 May 2002, http://www.blakearchive.org/.
[10] M. K. Joseph asserts that "Don Juanism has a good deal in common with the Brechtian *Verfremdung*, which likewise 'distances' the spectator from the action and provokes his reaction to it by a calculated use of the strange, the unexpected or the discordant." M. K. Joseph, *Byron the Poet* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1964), p. 323.

centre which nonetheless passionately concerned them.[11] Both mourned a likeminded friend: Etienne de la Boëtie in Montaigne's case, Percy Shelley in Byron's. Both wrote wide-ranging and self-reflexive books in a conversational style, and both made the most of parenthetical comments. While Philip Davis notes that "so many big things in the verse of *Don Juan* pass inside little brackets", André Tournon asserts that in the *Essays* "all incidental interventions, remarks and comments should not be considered accessory, treated as if they were in parenthesis or outside the dialectic of the text [...] These interventions are a part of the text, and they play an essential role in its organisation."[12] Byron himself acknowledged the *Essays* as a model for *Don Juan* when he wrote "I mean it for a poetical T[ristram] Shandy – or Montaigne's Essays with a story for a hinge" (BLJ X, 150).

Byron appears to have used four copies of Montaigne's essays at different times. Two copies appeared in the sale catalogue when Byron sold his library in 1816.[13] Leigh Hunt lent him a copy of the *Essays* in Charles Cotton's translation between July and September 1822, and observed that "the only writer of past times whom he read with avowed satisfaction, was Montaigne".[14] And James Hamilton Browne recorded that Byron read another copy on the boat to Cephalonia, between the end of June and the beginning of August 1823:

> He made it a constant rule to peruse every day one or more of the Essays of Montaigne. This practice, he said, he had pursued for a

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[11] Leigh Hunt mischievously suggested that although Byron shared Montaigne's aristocracy, "having fallen with various sorts of ambition upon more independent times, his rank did not sit so easily upon him; and not being quite so wise as Montaigne, he suffered his eye for 'universality' to be more obscured with spleen." [Leigh Hunt], 'Passages Marked in Montaigne's Essays by Lord Byron', *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, 19 (January 1827), p. 26.

[12] Philip Davis, '"I leave the thing a problem, like all things": On trying to catch up with Byron' in Beatty and Newey, pp. 242-84 (p. 244). André Tournon, 'Self-Interpretation in Montaigne's *Essais*', *Yale French Studies*, 64, Montaigne: Essays in Reading (1983) 51-72 (p. 51).

[13] One book was in English and one in French. The English edition listed as item 233 in the catalogue (CMP p. 240) was probably *The Essays of Michael de Montaigne*, trans. by Charles Cotton, 9th ed., 3 vols (London: William Miller et al., 1811). The French edition listed as item 228 in the catalogue (CMP p. 239) was probably the 1802 edition published in Paris. However, this edition was in four volumes, and in the sale catalogue it's recorded as three volumes. This may be an error, or a volume may have gone missing.

[14] Cited in Richard Kirkland, 'Byron's Reading of Montaigne: A Leigh Hunt Letter', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 30 (1981), 47-51 (p. 47).

> long time; adding his decided conviction, that more useful general knowledge and varied information were to be derived by an intimate acquaintance with the writings of that diverting author, than by a long and continuous course of study.
>
> (HVSV p. 387)

In 1827, Leigh Hunt published an article in the *New Monthly Magazine*, indicating which page-corners Byron had turned down in his copy of Montaigne,[15] and informing his readers that:

> Lord Byron had a peculiar way of marking the pages that pleased him. He usually made a double dog's-ear, of a very tight, and, as it were, irritable description; folding the corner twice, and drawing his nail with a sort of violence over it, as if to hinder "the dog's" escape from him.[16]

Richard Kirkland used this article to identify the essays in which Byron marked passages.[17] In what follows, I will refer chiefly to these essays, as well as to others, in order to argue that Byron turned to Montaigne for support when writing in opposition to the subject of modernity. This argument will appear to be in conflict with that strand of literary criticism that views Montaigne and related writers of the early modern period as the pioneers of modern subjectivity. The difference is one of emphasis; I am concerned not with tracing the first stirrings of modernity but with the normalisation of modern subjectivity. Modernity begins in earnest not at the earliest point in history when recognisably modern ideas appear, but immediately after the latest point in history when *any other* idea can be entertained. Modernity is heralded not by the possibility of modern thought, but by its hegemony.

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[15] The article was in the form of a letter to the editor, and appeared in two parts. [Leigh Hunt] 'Passages Marked in Montaigne's *Essays* by Lord Byron', *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, 19 (January 1827), 26-32 and (March 1827), 240-45. From this article I deduce that the copy Byron used on the boat to Cephalonia was not Hunt's. Although Hunt did not record when and how he got his book back (Kirkland, p. 49) it seems unlikely that he made notes at the time of the page-corners which Byron turned down and later worked from another copy of the essays when transcribing the passages in 1827. It is more likely that Byron returned the book to Hunt, who then used it to prepare his article in 1827.

[16] Hunt, p. 26.

[17] They are: 'On the Education of Children' (1. 26), 'On Practice' (2. 6), 'On the Useful and Honourable' (3. 1), 'On Repenting' (3. 2), 'On Vanity' (3. 9) and 'On Experience' (3. 13). Kirkland, p. 48. To this list we can add 'On the Lame' (3. 11) which Byron mentions elsewhere (CMP p. 125).

II

That hegemony reveals itself when the first facet of subjectivity with which I am concerned becomes the norm. The subject of modernity takes for granted a conception of his or her life as a developmental narrative in which he or she makes rational judgements in order to overcome obstacles and progressively approach fulfilment through ever greater self-actualisation. The assumed aim is to "express yourself" and the promised payoff is to be "truly yourself". Roy Porter puts it like this:

> There's a standard way of telling the story of the self, one that embodies and bolsters core Western values. Its climax is in the fulfilment of the cherished ideal of "being yourself" [...] In other words, the secret of selfhood is commonly seen to lie in authenticity and individuality, and its history is presented as a biography of progress towards that goal, overcoming great obstacles in the process.[18]

The paradigmatic Romantic version of this story is *The Prelude*. Clifford Siskin has analysed both *The Prelude's* narrative shape and its revisions as examples of the Romantic "strategy of development" by which Romantic writers "made change make sense" and produced selves which enabled and were adapted to the economic and social conditions of modernity. "[D]evelopment", he argues, "is an all-encompassing formal strategy underpinning middle-class culture itself: its characteristic way of representing and evaluating the individual as something that grows."[19]

The progressive individual narrative that Siskin reads as Romanticism's life-story came to characterise workers in traditional capitalism. Beginning with an apprenticeship that provided the skills he or she would continue to use and develop throughout his or her working life, the worker's career typically progressed through incremental promotion within a small number of institutions in the same industry and often in the same locale. The worker's "experience accumulated materially and

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[18] Roy Porter, 'Introduction' in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. by Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1-14 (p. 1).
[19] Clifford Siskin, *The Historicity of Romantic Discourse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 12.

psychically;" according to Richard Sennett, and "life thus made sense to him as a linear narrative."[20] With each pay packet, mortgage payment, pension contribution or accumulation of interest on savings, a life-narrative extended and developed. While it would be callous to overlook the higher levels of insecurity and itinerancy at the very bottom of the social scale, this narrative of progressive development provided a powerful framework for understanding selfhood in traditional capitalism. Indeed, this developmental narrative of accumulation or growth over time has been theorised as a generalised characteristic of modernity. Anthony Giddens describes selfhood in modernity as "a reflexive project, for which the individual is responsible [...] [and which] forms a trajectory of development" and Zygmunt Bauman suggests that this feature cultivates the historical shift into modernity and drives the subsequent globalisation of "modern" ideas:

> Most theoretical models of modernity select inner dynamism and the capacity for change and self-improvement as the central characteristics and the ultimate sources of modernity's worldwide ascendancy and attractiveness.[21]

Dating from the Lockean image of the self as a *tabula rasa* awaiting the inscription of sense impressions, the developmental self of modernity appears to offer unprecedented potential for a newly privatised kind of self-fulfilment. But, as Max Weber argues and Byron knows, that's not the whole story.

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber famously argued that the self-realisation modernity seemed to promise was in fact indefinitely deferred. In Wordsworth's words, it was "something evermore about to be."[22] Weber's concern with Protestantism's spiritual narratives will inform my discussion of how Byron critiques the developmental subject's normalisation. The secular developmental narratives of Romanticism can be

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[20] Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), p. 16.
[21] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), p. 75. Zygmunt Bauman, *The Bauman Reader*, ed. by Peter Beilharz (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 166.
[22] *The Prelude*, 6. 542, in William Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ed. by Mark L. Reed, 2 vols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), I, 190.

seen as the mutated descendants of spiritual narratives, such as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which concern the believer's efforts to reform his sinful nature. Such efforts depend on grace for their success, but are associated with strenuous devotion, and enable the pilgrim progressively to approach salvation.[23] I will shortly argue that the connection between development and reform is important to Byron's understanding of the issues surrounding modern subjectivity. But first, Weber's concern with capitalism's saleable narratives helps me to explain why the developmental subject's normalisation constrains Byron the celebrity. Weber asserts that the worker in capitalism practices "worldly asceticism" by (indefinitely) deferring gratification, and thus turns his life into a developmental narrative of accumulation.[24] Colin Campbell has criticised Weber for offering no account of consumerism and suggested that the Romantic period gave birth to a culture of luxury consumption.[25] Among the commodities the Romantic period's consumers eagerly purchased were stories of development which helped them to imagine their own lives as developmental narratives. The celebrity's career was another developmental narrative made available for consumption, and I contend that the celebrity's life *had* to be developmentally shaped in order to be successfully marketed.

In the sequence of poems that made up Byron's celebrity career, each new publication had to be distinctly different but recognisably the same. If the new book were to be marketed successfully, devoted readers had to be convinced that it would offer similar gratifications to the last volume they had bought and enjoyed. If it deviated too far from the established ingredients of his celebrity, readers would be likely to reject it

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[23] These narratives in turn render developmental still earlier non-developmental stories of psychomachia (e.g. *Everyman*) or conversion (e.g. St Augustine or St Paul).
[24] E.g. "Christian asceticism, at first fleeing from the world into solitude, had already ruled the world which it had renounced from the monastery and through the Church. But it had, on the whole, left the naturally spontaneous character of daily life in the world untouched. Now it strode into the market-place of life, slammed the door of the monastery behind it, and undertook to penetrate just that routine of life with its methodicalness, to fashion it into a life in the world, but neither of nor for this world." Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by Talcott Parsons (London: Allen & Unwin, 1930), p. 154.
[25] Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

and to regret that Byron had lost his touch. But readers also had to be convinced that the new volume would offer a new pleasure; a satisfaction they could not get by rereading the last volume they had bought, a diversion they had not already enjoyed. Otherwise why should they pay for an experience which they had already bought and which they could repeat as often as they chose? The idea of a developmentally narrativised subject enabled Byron and Murray to walk this marketing tightrope. Byron's celebrity career required that each publication should be different while at the same time being connected to the last by a developmental narrative. Each time Murray issued another uniform volume of his ongoing collected edition of Byron's works, that narrative was consolidated. This was not *The Prelude's* kind of development, which justified ceaseless revision and repeatedly deferred publication, but development expressed in a series of published poems marketed as cumulative instalments in the ongoing story of their author's fascinating life.

It was this commercial insistence that his career should be developmental that had constrained Byron when he came to publish *Hebrew Melodies*. Murray's strategy for handling that collection was an attempt to reconnect it to a linear perception of Byron's development; one that underwrote Murray's income and did not veer into new kinds of writing and unforeseen collaborations. This concern about Byron's worrisome swerves from a discernible line of development was played out again when he shifted into ottava rima. Having adopted such a completely new form, in some ways Byron no longer seemed like himself. John Hookham Frere, whose poem had alerted Byron to ottava rima's potential in English, registered surprise along with his praise of *Beppo*. Murray reported that:

> Mr Frere is at length satisfied that your Lordship is the author of Beppo, he had no conception that you possessed the protean talent of Shakespeare – thus to assume at will so different a character – he and every one continues in the same high opinion of its great beauties – I am glad to find that your Lordship is disposed to persue [sic] this strain which has occasioned so much delight[.][26]

[26] Murray to Byron 16 June 1818. Cited in Smiles, I, 393.

For a Romantic celebrity to be protean was a problem, because it disrupted the marketable identity that the publisher strove to create. Murray was left hoping that Byron would pursue the new strain, making it a permanent and therefore manageable shift, rather than an anomaly like *Hebrew Melodies*. When Byron had wanted to reform in 1815, he had discovered that his career was not simply his to control, but involved uncomfortable compromises with his celebrity. Less disposed to compromise by the time he came to write *Don Juan*, he turned his attention to the restraints that the emerging norms placed on reform.

Normalising the modern subject meant assuming that all life stories were developmental narratives. *Don Juan* highlights the limits of this assumption. Everyone in modernity is expected to discover in themselves the autonomous capacity for rationally taking control of their life and turning it into a narrative of progressive development towards triumphant self-fulfilment. Development can then become an evaluative category: well-regulated individuals develop on their own, deviant ones do not. The spiritual story of casting off a corrupted nature by grace and rejecting a sinful past in favour of a salvific future metamorphoses into the individualistic will to power, imagined as a secular vocation for Wordsworth and as a route to worldly success for Weberian man. As the modern subject became normalised in the Romantic period, the capacity for development became the sign of being fully human. But in *Don Juan*, self-determining development is a feature not of human nature but of cultural power. While some people get to forge their own path, others are constrained to run on tracks (or on treadmills) made by others. The subject of modernity is credited with the autonomous capacity to reform and can thus subsume minor setbacks into a larger success story. But Byron directs attention to those marginalised individuals who are made subject to censure, who have their setbacks condemned and their stories told for them. Some people get to reform: others are disciplined.

One example of this is the significantly nameless country girl, whose pre-marital pregnancy brings her to the attention of Lord Henry Amundeville.

Lord Henry's version of development is continually to improve his house and its contents. He cultivates his sensibilities through consumption. He covets "A special Titian, warranted original" which a picture dealer has brought to show him (16. 56), and commissions improvements to Norman Abbey which will display its owner's well-developed discrimination in:

> An edifice no less sublime than strong,
> By which Lord Henry's good taste would go forth in
> Its glory, through all ages shining sunny,
> For Gothic daring shown in English money.
>
> (16. 59)

While Lord Henry makes his mark in the county, the scarlet cloak she's forced to wear marks out the shamed country girl. When Lord Henry gets round to his duties as a justice of the peace, she's lined up with "two poachers caught in a steel trap" and forced to submit with "patient tribulation" to a legal framework that governs morality with the same instrumental rationality that it uses to govern land economy (16. 61, 65):

> Now Justices of Peace must judge all pieces
> Of mischief of all kinds, and keep the game
> And morals of the country from caprices
> Of those who have not a license for the same;
> And of all things, excepting tithes and leases,
> Perhaps these are most difficult to tame:
> Preserving partridges and pretty wenches
> Are puzzles to the most precautious benches.
>
> (16. 63)

In this octave masterclass in enjambment and zeugma, Byron explains the operation of the steel trap that has caught the "espiegle" girl (16. 65). Lacking the license for her moral caprice that might be granted to an upper-class man, she ends up subject to the kind of justice dispensed by Lord Henry. In the crude pun that the enjambment points, she becomes a "piece", to be administered along with the estate. The magistrate provides a judicial solution to a moral question. The woman's sexuality and the county's game are both subject to acts of enclosure, "tame[d]" by judicial power; yoked together by Lord Henry's disciplinary bench and Lord Byron's satirical zeugmas.

When she becomes subject to the law, the pregnant country girl is denied the possibility of repenting, and therefore of developing. Since repentance requires a free choice, when the constable detains the woman "beneath a warrant's banner", her evidences of repentance become at once compulsory and superfluous (16. 62). Compulsory because she is obliged to wear a literal cloak of shame. But superfluous because the scarlet cloak cloaks her shame and does not display it. While it purports to signify her repentance, in fact it signifies only her subjection. Repentance cannot, by definition, be enforced. Instead of being allowed to repent, atone and reform, she is arrested, found guilty and punished. Excluded from the precincts of pristine morality by her runaway sexuality and from the beau monde of fashion by her class, the girl blanches with terror instead of blushing with embarrassment (16. 64). The fallen woman is denied the chance to write her fall into a narrative of development in which it becomes a minor setback in a march of progress. As such, her selfhood cannot become Giddens's "reflexive project, for which the individual is responsible" and she cannot claim the "inner dynamism" that Bauman locates in the modern subject. Her terror is unlike Wordsworth's terror in the stolen boat beneath the striding mountain, because her terror has no place in a developmental narrative.[27]

Byron had previously warned Caroline Lamb, "woman once fallen forever must fall", and elsewhere in *Don Juan* he generalised this complaint to apply to women of all classes, who "if there's an eclât [...] lose their caste at once, as do the Parias" (12. 78).[28] If they are detected, "Society, that china without flaw, / (The hypocrite!) will banish them like Marius" (12. 78). While claiming to leave the matter well alone, the narrator makes his opinion felt:

> Perhaps this is as it should be; – it is
> A comment on the Gospel's "Sin no more,

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[27] "the huge Cliff / Rose up between me and the stars, and still, / With measur'd motion, like a living thing, / Strode after me." William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, 1. 410-13, in Reed, I, 117.

[28] '[To Lady Caroline Lamb]', 14, CPW III, 17. See also "woman once falling / Forever must fall", 'When We Two Parted', cancelled stanza, CPW III, 320.

> And be thy sins forgiven:" – but upon this
> I leave the saints to settle their own score.
> Abroad, though doubtless they do much amiss,
> An erring woman finds an opener door
> For her return to Virtue – as they call
> That Lady who should be at home to all.
>
> (12. 79)

Society's rush to judgement leaves no space for grace, no possibility of freely chosen repentance and therefore no chance of becoming the developmental subject of modernity. By foreclosing the opportunity to reclaim particular falls as part of a narrative of general progress, such "uneasy Virtue" undermines its stated intent and "leads / People some ten times less in fact to mind it, / and care but for discoveries and not deeds" (12. 80). For those caught in their steel traps, these moral laws "aggravate the crime [they] have not prevented, / By rendering desperate those who had else repented" (12. 80). With the advent of modernity, the capacity to understand your life as a developmental narrative becomes a "natural" attribute of subjectivity; something that everyone is assumed to have. But this normalisation means overlooking those nameless individuals, such as the pregnant country girl, who are not allowed to develop and who do not get to tell their own stories.

Suspicious of claims for development's universality, Byron foregrounds the non-developmental and contradictory nature of Juan and the narrator. In the world of *Don Juan*, change is rarely developmental, and stability is unknown – the only two times Byron uses the word "perpetual", it comes before the word "motion".[29] The poem can be seen as an anti-bildungsroman, and Juan as a character who stubbornly refuses to develop as a "modern" character in a realistic novel would be expected to. Nicola Watson has studied Byron's "deformations" of the generic markers of sentimental fiction.[30] While he borrowed those features only to bend them, he also drew on non-realist and non-literary sources. Moyra Haslett and

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[29] Dedication. 13; 15. 112.
[30] Nicola J. Watson, 'Trans-figuring Byronic Identity' In *At the Limits of Romanticism: Essays in Cultural, Feminist and Materialist Criticism*, ed. by Mary A. Favret and Nicola J. Watson (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 185-206.

Peter Graham have both located sources for *Don Juan* in the popular contemporary versions of the story that flourished in pantomime and spectacular theatre:

> Theatrical Don Juans dominated the London stage between 1817 and 1825, years significantly contemporaneous with the publication of Byron's *Don Juan*. With at least eleven parodies, burlesques, and pantomimes of the legend all competing against and drawing attention to each other, most readers of Byron's poem probably knew several if not many versions.[31]

Haslett encourages us to recognise Don Juan as a legendary and not a realistic character, and Juan's anti-realistic nature is nowhere more marked than in his failure to develop. Juan "lacks the ability to organise and schematize life" according to Alvin Kernan, and he "lacks [the] mental function [of] memory" on which the modern subject relies to construct a developmental narrative of his or her life.[32] "Whether his progress can be classified as a *Bildungsroman* and he can be said to develop as a result of experience," writes Timothy Webb, "is highly debatable".[33] Bernard Blackstone concludes that "He can be corrupted, but he has small possibility for growth. He learns nothing from his experiences, except as an insect might learn, in the laboratory[.]"[34]

Juan does not build on the past in order to grow, or to cultivate his feelings. "There was the purest platonism at bottom / Of all his feelings – only he forgot 'em" (10. 54). Instead he forgets the past while all the time forgetting himself with another woman. Despite the narrator's protest he forgets Julia as soon as Haidee appears on the scene. "But Juan! had he quite forgotten Julia? / And should he have forgotten her so soon?" (2. 208). He remembers Haidee long enough to shun the soprano's advances, but even this, the longest of his love affairs, evaporates when he comes to his

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[31] Moyra Haslett, *Byron's Don Juan and the Don Juan Legend* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 4. See also Peter Graham, *Don Juan and Regency England* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), esp. 'All Things – But a Show?' pp. 62-88
[32] Alvin B. Kernan, *The Plot of Satire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 189.
[33] Timothy Webb, 'Byron as a Man of the World,' In *L'esillo Romantico: Forme di un Conflitto*, ed. by Joseph Cheyne and Lilla Maria Crisafulli Jones, (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1990), pp. 279-301 (p. 292).
[34] Blackstone, p. 314.

senses (probably) with Dudu.[35] The only subjective development Byron planned for Juan was "to have displayed him gradually gaté and blasé as he grew older" (BLJ VIII, 78). By Canto Twelve "his heart had got a tougher rind", but his story was not a developmental one, and Byron's varied plans for him indicate that, despite the just deserts that the Juan of legend receives, this Juan is by no means on a teleological course (12. 81).[36] Moreover, Don Juan cannot develop progressively over time, like Wordsworth or Weberian man, because time in *Don Juan* is non-linear. The poem, as several critics have noted, unfolds in three different time frames at once. The historical action of the plot can be precisely fixed around the siege of Ismail in 1790. Most of the details, especially in the English cantos, are remembered from the height of Byron's celebrity, 1812-1816. The narrator's interventions in the poem refer to the period of composition, 1819-1824. The poem shifts rapidly between these time frames and blurs their boundaries. This layered chronology implies that *Don Juan*'s time is non-linear and therefore not conducive to progressive subjective development.

The narrator does not develop in the poem any more than Juan does. "'The time is out of joint,' – and so am I" he comments (9. 41). Always kept on his toes by the ottava rima stanza, the narrator insists on his own inconstancy, mobility and resistance to developmental explanations:

> Temperate I am – yet never had a temper;
> Modest I am – yet with some slight assurance;
> Changeable too – yet somehow "*Idem Semper*":
> Patient – but not enamoured of endurance;
> Cheerful – but, sometimes, rather apt to whimper:
> Mild – but at times a sort of "*Hercules furens*":

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[35] Haidee is the longest of Juan's affairs according to Jerome McGann's calculations. He counts 222 stanzas for Julia's story, 159 for Gulbeyez, 120 for Dudu, 100 for Catherine and 305 for Haidee. See Jerome J. McGann, *Don Juan in Context* (London: John Murray, 1976), p. 128.

[36] Byron jokingly suggested that he would make the poem 50 cantos long (BLJ VI, 105), or perhaps 100 (BLJ X, 150), and that he would go on "as long as I can write" (BLJ X, 135). He envisaged Juan as "a Cavalier Servente in Italy and a cause for a divorce in England – and a Sentimental 'Werther-faced man' in Germany" but could not decide whether he should conclude his career in the French Revolution, in Hell or in an unhappy marriage: "the Spanish tradition says Hell – but it is probably only an allegory of the other state" (BLJ VIII, 78). Perhaps Byron's most plausible comment on his plan was "I *have* no plan – I *had* no plan – but I had or have materials" (BLJ VI, 207).

So that I almost think that the same skin
For one without – has two or three within.

(17. 11)

No statement about him can be allowed to pass unqualified – not even that he is changeable. Held together only by his skin, the narrator resists narration; his subjectivity refuses to conform to a developmental narrative. Two cantos earlier, he had flirted with the idea that he developed from error to truth, reforming his opinions as he went. But he undercut this comforting notion by suggesting that even opposite ideas are "twin". And in its place he introduced the possibility of an ongoing succession of contradictory ideas with no point of reference outside the sequence by which to reckon their worth:

Also observe, that like the great Lord Coke,
(See Littleton) whene'er I have expressed
Opinions two, which at first sight may look
Twin opposites, the second is the best.
Perhaps I have third too in a nook,
Or none at all – which seems a sorry jest[.]

(15. 87)

Such a narrator, with such a hero on his hands, produces not a bildungsroman or a *Prelude*, but a poem as "chequered" as "your world" (8. 89), a "non-descript and ever varying rhyme, / A versified Aurora Borealis" (7. 2).

Sometimes, paradoxically, such self-inconsistency is a necessary expedient for maintaining an integrated identity. Change may be necessary not in order to develop but simply in order to remain distinct, for instance when the characteristically Byronic narrator does something unByronic just to remain distinct in a literary marketplace that's been comprehensively Byronised. When the eunuch Baba is leading Juan through the seraglio, the narrator refuses to be tempted into the oriental descriptions he might have indulged in not because he has outgrown them but because everyone else has grown into them. The party passes "orange bowers, and jasmine and so forth":

(Of which I might have a good deal to say,
There being no such profusion in the North
Of oriental plants, "et cetera,"
But that of late your scribblers think it worth
Their while to rear whole hotbeds in *their* works
Because one poet travell'd 'mongst the Turks;)

(5. 42)

Even though "description is my forte", the narrator declines to describe, because "every fool describes in these bright days / His wond'rous journey to some foreign court" (5. 52). To stay ahead of the game in the literary marketplace, the narrator does not polish up his forte but abandons it: he does not develop, he simply changes. And his lack of development does not destabilise his identity. The fact that the narrator can apparently watch himself changing enables him to know that there is something in him which is unchanging, something whose continuity is assured precisely because it registers the subject's shifts.

From the beginning, the narrator suggests that his changes are unlike the fall from grace suffered by the fallen women. While they "lose their caste at once", are "banish[ed]" and "render[ed] desperate" (12. 78-80), when he falls he always recovers himself (a bit like an ottava rima stanza, which is continually getting its rhymes in a tangle and then triumphantly untangling them, only to start over again). His good intentions are never dented by his failure to live up to them:

I make a resolution every spring
Of reformation, ere the year run out,
But, somehow, this my vestal vow takes wing,
Yet still, I trust, it may be kept throughout:
I'm very sorry, very much ashamed,
And mean, next winter, to be quite reclaim'd.

(1. 119)

The narrator's mobility here appears as inevitable moral backsliding combined with its twin opposite, the unimpaired possibility of reform. The purity of his "vestal vow" is as fragile as the virginity of the "pretty wenches" from Canto Sixteen, but unlike them, the narrator gets a second, and a third, chance to reform. For the narrator, every fall from grace can become the

occasion for a new reformation, as predictably as the change of season. Development, and its twin opposite disciplinary intervention, is edged out of *Don Juan* by non-developmental mobility and self-contradiction. These alternative, chaotic narratives of the self allow space for freely-chosen repentance that, while it does not turn the subject's life into a Bunyanesque progress towards salvation, does escape the steely disciplinary traps set for "poacher[s] upon Nature's manor" (16. 62).

Whilst he was foregrounding non-developmental and disintegrated aspects of subjectivity in *Don Juan*, Byron may have noticed similar emphases in Montaigne's *Essays*. Montaigne continually modified and elaborated his essays, but he emphasised that he was not improving towards fuller self-expression, writing, "I add, but I correct not."[37] His mind, he insisted, in an essay that Byron marked, was no more developmental than his book:[38]

> [M]y understanding does not always go forward, it goes backward too. I do not much less suspect my fancies for being the second or third, than for being the first, either present or past; we oft correct ourselves as foolishly as we do others. I am grown older by a great many years since my first publications, which were in the year 1580: but I very much doubt whether I am grown an inch the wiser. I now, and I anon, are two several persons; but whether the better, now or anon, I am not able to determine. It were a fine thing to be old, if we only travelled towards improvement; but it is a drunken, stumbling, reeling, ill-favoured motion[.]
>
> (III, 222-23)

Rejecting any notion that life is progress or development, Montaigne stumbles and reels along, presenting a selfhood as contradictory and

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[37] Michel de Montaigne, *The Essays of Michael de Montaigne, translated into English with very considerable amendments and improvements from the most accurate French edition of Peter Coste*, trans. by Charles Cotton, 9th ed., 3 vols (London: William Miller et al., 1811), III, 222. It has not been possible positively to identify the edition(s) of Montaigne's *Essays* that Byron read. There were two translations available, by Florio and Cotton. Hunt's article indicates that Byron used Cotton's translation. The ninth edition, 1811, was the most recent edition to be published before Byron began work on *Don Juan*, and is hereafter cited in the text.

[38] When I refer to an essay that Byron marked, I mean that he turned down the corner of one of its pages in Hunt's edition. If I quote from an essay that Byron marked, it does not necessarily mean that he marked the page from which I quote. When I quote from a particular page marked by Byron, I will indicate this.

inconsistent as that of *Don Juan*'s narrator. "[U]neasiness and irresolution", for Montaigne as for the narrator, "are our governing and predominant qualities" (III, 257). This belief leads Montaigne at times to posit a radical lack of subjective integration, writing that "All we perform is no other than patch-work" and that "We are all such a rude medley of compounds, and those of so various a contexture, that every piece plays every moment its own game; and we are as different from our own selves as we are from each other" (I, 436, 437).

This keen sense of non-developmental self-inconsistency makes it difficult to keep morally on track, which is always Montaigne's concern.[39] But it also means that moral education or discipline cannot be based on the educator's claim to have a monopoly on virtue. "[V]irtue [...] is not, as the schoolmen say, situate upon the summit of a steep, rugged, and inaccessible hill" (I, 185). Contrary to the assumptions that place Lord Henry in judgement of the girl in the scarlet cloak, virtue cannot be administered. It does not flow from teacher to pupil, institution to individual, government to population, or magistrate to miscreant.[40] "[B]oys as well as men, the most simple as well as the most cunning, may attain to it" (I, 186). Byron marked a page where Montaigne spells out the disastrous results of attempting to administer virtue through education:

> [O]ur minds take things upon trust, while they are constrained to follow other men's fancies. We have been so subjected to the trammel, that we have no free pace of our own; our vigour and liberty are extinct[.]
>
> (I, 169)

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[39] Donald Frame notes that "Human conduct is the central point of all. Keen psychologist though he was, Montaigne was always ultimately a moralist. [...] All he learned about himself and others was only partly an end in itself. It was also a means to his only final end: to live well and appropriately and – when he had learned how – to teach others to do so." Donald M. Frame, *Montaigne's Discovery of Man: The Humanisation of a Humanist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), p. 10.

[40] Cf. Timothy Webb's suggestion that *Don Juan*'s "own brand of shrewd yet cynical wisdom" is based on "a code of values which has evolved existentially rather than being generated by the spurious authority of abstractions." Webb, 'Byron as a Man of the World,' p. 292.

Leigh Hunt was in no doubt what attracted Byron to this passage, and noted that "It is in favour of a man's exercising his own powers and judgement, unenslaved by authority."[41] Both Byron and Montaigne favoured self-determination over the judgement of those in authority, but neither placed acts of self-determination within a developmental progress. These convictions informed Montaigne's essay 'Of Repentance', of which Byron marked the final page.

Montaigne presents repentance in terms that further illuminate the elements of *Don Juan* I outlined above. He asserts that repentance must be autonomous, that it is asocial, taking place beyond society's disciplinary frameworks, and that it is non-developmental. Although Montaigne "seldom repent[s] of any thing", when he does his repentance must be autonomous and fundamental (III, 3). "I have no notion of a repentance that is superficial, moderate, or ceremonious. It must sting me throughout before I can give it that name, and it must pierce my heart as deeply and universally as God sees into me" (III, 14). Repentance at the instigation of others or for their benefit is not worthy of the name; "our consciences must amend of themselves" (III, 18). True repentance for Montaigne takes place outside convention's disciplinary frameworks. Although he welcomes his friends' assessments of his moral health, he does not act upon them but insists that the only moral standards he upholds are his own:

> We [...] ought to have a tribunal established in our breasts, whereby to try our actions [...] I have my laws and my court of justice to judge myself by, and apply myself to those more than to any other rules [...] It is only known to yourself whether you are cowardly and cruel, or loyal and devout.
>
> (III, 5)

Those who would conform to social models, in Byron's words, "care but for discoveries and not deeds" (12. 80), or as Montaigne puts it, "reform seeming vices; but as for real vices they leave them as they were, if they do not augment them" (III, 10). Finally, Montaigne rejects the conventional piety that reform leads developmentally to virtue in old age. He "hate[s] that

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[41] Hunt, p. 240.

accidental repentance which old age brings with it" (III, 16) affirming that the flesh's infirmity should not be mistaken for the soul's temperance. "We ought to love temperance for its own sake, and in respect to God, who has commanded both that and chastity" he argues. "What we derive from catarrhs, and what I am obliged for to my cholic, is neither chastity nor temperance" (III, 18). Just because Montaigne's ageing flesh is less libidinous does not mean he loves chastity any more fervently. Like *Don Juan*'s narrator, who means to reform every spring, Montaigne declines to link his reforms to a developmental narrative of progressive improvement.

What Montaigne essays, Byron hinges to a story. His "piece of natural history" (16. 62) shows how the woman is denied the chance to reclaim her transgression by writing it into a narrative of development because her action is overwritten by a judiciary which claims to administer "the game / And morals of the country" (16. 63). The cost of normalising the developmental subject was that, while some lives could be written up as narratives of progressive self-realisation authorised by a proper-name (like Wordsworth's), other lives had to be written off as irredeemably perverse or crooked, their nameless subjects (like the country girl) subjected to disciplinary intervention. Byron may have drawn on his reading of Montaigne when presenting the anti-realist, non-developmental characters of Juan and the narrator. He may also have drawn on Montaigne when he wrote into *Don Juan* features which resisted the iron law of morality imposed on the subject from outside by a disciplinary apparatus that, paradoxically, made repentance impossible by trying to enforce it.

III

The second facet of modern subjectivity that I focus on in this chapter does not concern how the subject's life is narrated, but how the subject's construction is imagined. While it is understood to extend along a developmental narrative, the subject of modernity is also understood to be structured around an interior space configured in specific ways. Romanticism has been linked to the emergence of depth psychology, but

what concerns me here is not how or when those depths first appeared, but two apparently contradictory attributes ascribed to them.[42] I will suggest that the discourse of celebrity was among the first to articulate these attributes for a large and culturally literate public. Firstly, the modern subject's interior is thought of as hidden. The subject's truth lies in its inner depth, concealed from view. But the second attribute ascribed to modern subjective interiority is legibility. While inner space is not easy to navigate, specialist modern discourses claim to offer maps. Sociological approaches such as Erving Goffman's present subjective interiority as the hiding-place of a rational self who manipulates a range of social masks.[43] The sociologist sets out to discover the authentic impresario of our social appearances. Psychoanalytic approaches, by contrast, emphasise that the subject may not even know herself, and present interiority as irrational and conflicted, riven between Conscious and Unconscious, fragile and in danger of overbalancing into neurosis. The subject of modernity is understood to be structured around an interior that is hidden and yet legible.

Literary critics have focussed on the role of realism in producing this hidden interiority, rendering it legible and normalising it. With the growth of what Margaret Anne Doody calls "prescriptive realism" at the end of the eighteenth century, "realism emerges not as a suggestion but as a kind of ideology" helping to create the modern subject's consciousness of himself and the world.[44] According to Elizabeth Ermarth, "in realism, identity becomes series-dependent, which is to say that it becomes abstract, removed from direct apprehension to a hidden dimension of depth."[45] Surface impressions, then, become "mere concretia that owe their significance to the invisible inner reality they register", and a newly penetrative intelligence is required to sound the subject's depths. "What can be seen is always an aspect, what is essentially there has receded to an

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[42] Andrea K. Henderson, for example, writes "Critics have long argued that one of the defining features and enduring legacies of Romantic writing is its characterisation of the self in terms of psychological depth." Henderson, p. 1.
[43] See Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin, 1990).
[44] Margaret Anne Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (London: Fontana, 1998), p. 288.
[45] Ermarth, p. 5.

abstract realm of conceptualisation that we might call depth and this is inaccessible to direct experience at the same time as it entirely informs it."[46] Free indirect discourse, which Deirdre Lynch describes as "one of the novel's chief resources for depth effects," enables the reader to penetrate into this core of authenticity, creating the impression that the subject's hidden interiority is legible.[47] Lynch considers ways in which the kind of penetrative, perceptive, sympathetic reading this produced was employed to mark some readers off from other inattentive, passive and popular readers and thus to enforce social and cultural distinctions. Privileging kinds of writing which contained "deep" characterisation and kinds of reading which paid close attention to character analysis, realism changed the way its readers thought about themselves, established "the parameters of a psychological culture" and helped to institutionalise the discipline of literature.[48] While realism provided a powerful way of modelling subjectivity, celebrity also functioned to help normalise the hidden-yet-legible subject. The apparatus of celebrity is one amongst what Nikolas Rose describes as "a whole variety of practical 'machines' [...] which engage human beings on the condition that they relate to themselves as psychological selves."[49] The celebrity apparatus has a commercial interest in its subject's hidden yet legible interiority and therefore promotes that aspect of subjectivity along with the figure of the celebrity.

I have described celebrity's investment in legible interiority as the hermeneutic of intimacy, employed by readers who are convinced that the poet is revealing his deepest self in his poems in such a way that each reader gains an insight which is unavailable to all others. The celebrity's hidden interiority is made legible in the poem by the reader's refined sensibility, much as the analysand's psyche is made legible in the analytic conversation by the analyst's mastery of psychoanalytic discourse. What

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[46] Ibid. pp. 20, 24.
[47] Lynch, p. 151.
[48] Ibid. p. 128. See also '"Round" Characters and Romantic-Period Reading Relations', pp. 123-63.
[49] Nikolas Rose, 'Assembling the Modern Self,' in Porter, *Rewriting the Self*, pp. 224-48 (pp. 245-46).

holds for the modern psychologised subject in general holds for the celebrity in particular: his authentic truth has retreated to a deep inner space where it lurks in secret, hidden from observers. And yet at the same time it continually pours out in writing, in conversation, on the surface of the body and its adornments, where it is made legible for those who have the professional expertise or the cultural virtue of knowing how to look. The celebrity's subjectivity must be imagined in this way in response to a commercial imperative. When reading in industrial culture is imagined as a relationship of intimacy, the author's true character must be hidden in order to sustain the sense of intimacy, yet legible in order to enable the relationship.

This kind of penetrative reading had earlier unsettled Byron, as I suggested in my chapter on *The Bride of Abydos*. At that time, the marketing of interiority had left Byron at pains to assert the private and hidden nature of his selfhood. Recoiling from the public gaze, he hid himself from visitors and social gatherings, and made sure his writing was illegible to a public audience by confining it to a private journal. That effort, I argued, also extended to reasserting the boundary between interior and exterior metonymically, through obsessively controlled eating. These acute private anxieties had abated by the time Byron wrote *Don Juan*, but he had a related, political concern about the discourses that the hidden-yet-legible subject could be used to legitimate. Byron calls those discourses "cant". I will suggest that the modern concept of the subject as hidden and yet legible ran through the debate that *Don Juan* provoked. This assumption about subjectivity enabled the Byronic indictment of cant. It also underpinned his adversaries' defence, and their condemnation of Byron in return. But crucially, as I will show, it did not enable the fourth element in this exchange: the Byronic self-defence.

Byron uses the word to connect hypocrisy with jargon.[50] In either case, cant is produced by a discontinuity: between precept and practice, or sound and sense. Cant results not simply from inconsistent public statements, but from an inconsistency between public statements and private motives. The important swerve for Byron is not between early opinions and later ones, but between inner reality and outward appearance.[51] For all his complaints about the apostasy of the Lakers, they canted not because they changed their convictions but because they seemed to him to *have* no convictions beyond self-interest.[52] When Byron attacked his enemies for sailing before the prevailing political wind, he did so because their public pronouncements were not underwritten by private principles. His objection was therefore based on the hidden-yet-legible model of subjectivity. In a space of hidden interiority, Byron's opponents nursed motives that he claimed to be able to read lurking behind their public statements. Their pronouncements proceeded from a rotten core which, in the preface to cantos 6-8, Byron targeted with the help of two quotations from Voltaire:

> La pudeur s'est enfuite des coeurs, et s'est refugiée sur les lèvres.
>
> Plus les moeurs sont dépravés, plus les expressions deviennent mesurées; on croit regagner en langage ce qu'on a perdu en vertu.
>
> [Modesty has fled from hearts, and taken refuge on lips.
>
> The more depraved morals become, the more measured expressions become; we think we can win back in language what we have lost in virtue.]
>
> (CPW V, 296)

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[50] OED lists, among other definitions: "to talk unreally or hypocritically with an affectation of goodness or piety"; "the special phraseology of a particular class of persons, or belonging to a particular subject; professional or technical jargon. (Always depreciative or contemptuous)"; and "phraseology taken up and used for fashion's sake, without being a genuine expression of sentiment".

[51] Cf. Hazlitt's comparable argument, which may have been influenced by Byron (whom he quotes), in his fragment 'On Cant and Hypocrisy'. William Hazlitt, *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, ed. by Duncan Wu, 9 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), IX, 177-85.

[52] The word cant points out the connections between the distinct crimes of hypocrisy and apostasy in its third definition, "a slope, a slanting or tilted position; a deflection from the perpendicular or horizontal line."

In arraigning polished hypocrisy, these quotations point to the distance between virtue and language, or hearts and lips. But while Byron uses Voltaire to emphasise the dissonance between the subject's interior and exterior, his canting opponents defend themselves by making claims for their consonance.

The canting critics who Byron fulminates against and the canting characters he represents defend themselves using a rhetoric of sincerity. That rhetoric valorises statements which are understood to connect directly to the subject's interior and to gain authority and authenticity from it. The word sincerity "as we now use it", according to Lionel Trilling, "refers primarily to a congruence between avowal and actual feeling."[53] Byron concurs in the rhetoric of sincerity in his very early review of Wordsworth, where he praises him as "a genuine poet, feeling as he writes" (CMP p. 8), and in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, where he praises poets who "Feel as they write, and write but as they feel" (816). Swinburne uses the same rhetoric to applaud Byron's "sincerity and strength", employing a critical criterion which Christensen describes as "a version of Romantic poetry that was concocted by the quarterly reviews, petted into maturity by Arnold, coddled in its old age by David Perkins, and embalmed by Trilling".[54] This defensive rhetoric of sincerity, like Byron's understanding of cant, depends on a concept of the subject as hidden yet legible. A cant (jargon) that automatically refers us back to the hidden subjective interior of the speaker sustains cant (hypocrisy). Trading on a false show of deep feeling, the last line of defence when things go wrong for those who cant is to claim that at least their intentions were good:

> [W]hat we call "the best
> Intentions" [...] form all mankind's *trump card*,

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[53] Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 2.
[54] Swinburne, *Essays and Studies* (1875), cited in Rutherford, p. 373. Christensen, *Lord Byron's Strength*, xiv. It's ironic that Swinburne should have used the same rhetoric of sincerity to rescue Byron from his detractors by detecting the best intentions beneath Byron's poetry: "His sincerity indeed is difficult to discover and define; but it does in effect lie at the root of all his good works: deformed by pretension and defaced by assumption, masked by folly and veiled by affectation; but perceptible after all, and priceless." (Cited in Rutherford, p. 373.) Byron's worth, for Swinburne, lies "at the root" of his poetry, in the hidden but legible interior of his subjectivity.

> To be produced when brought up to the test.
> The statesman, hero, harlot, lawyer – ward
> Off each attack, when people are in quest
> Of their designs, by saying they *meant well*;
> 'Tis pity "that such meaning should pave Hell."
>
> (8. 25)

When someone like Byron comes "in quest / Of their designs", intending to probe the hidden subjective interior where motives lurk, the canters head off the attack by claiming to bare their souls. Byron distrusts their strategy both because he doubts that they are revealing their true intent, and because he refuses to allow good intentions to be an escape route from bad outcomes. Byron satirically notes how producing your best intentions when you have "a visit from the brother [...] to demand / What 'your intentions are?'" makes all the difference between a dalliance and a courtship (12. 60). Lady Adeline, when she takes an interest in Juan, "might flatter / Herself that her intentions were the best" in order to keep her conscience clear, but the narrator warns, "Intense intentions are a dangerous matter" (14. 88). The rhetoric of sincerity, Byron suggests, rarely refers to the real motives, and even when it does, motives make no difference.

Such rhetoric of sincerity rests of course on faulty logic. The merit of a public statement such as a poem is judged by reference to an interior state for which the only evidence is the statement itself. You know an action is good by the intention that produced it: you know an intention is good by the action it produced. The hidden interior to which such rhetoric appeals can only be known in so far as it apparently makes itself legible in its public pronouncements, closing the logical circle. This justificatory rhetoric of sincerity, then, is cant in its second sense: meaningless jargon, unreflectively employed, which refuses to engage with those who don't use its terms and mystifies what it claims to illuminate. This cant becomes so automatic that it condemns *Don Juan* without referring to its contents. Writing to Douglas Kinnaird from Pisa about possible cuts to Canto Twelve, Byron was defiant:

> With regard to "omissions" – recollect that the *Cant* of the Day has already taken it's [sic] tone – and that if the whole were reduced to an

> actual homily – they would *cant* the same. We are not to yield to such things.
>
> (BLJ IX, 196, italics in original.)

Byron opposes cant by claiming to discern a disjunction between its outward appearance and its hidden but legible motives. The cant defence is to claim that the best intentions lie behind its public face, where those who know how to look can read them. Both rely on a modern understanding of the subject, which takes it to possess an interior which is hidden, but which can be made legible.

But circular reasoning and mystifying logic are no obstacles to disciplinary power. The rhetoric of sincerity that Byron's adversaries used to justify their own pronouncements by referring to good intentions could be turned on his supposedly bad intentions. *Blackwoods Magazine* blasted Byron's bad intentions in *Don Juan*, claiming that he:

> [Laid] bare to the eye of man and of *woman* all the hidden convulsions of a wicked spirit – thoughts too abominable, we would hope, to have been imagined by any but him that has expressed them – and [did] all this without one symptom of pain, contrition, remorse, or hesitation, with a calm careless ferociousness of contented and satisfied depravity[.]
>
> (RR I, 144)

Blackwoods was convinced that Byron had made his hidden interiority legible in *Don Juan*, and it elided the poem with Byron's character to damn both at once. Byron feigned shock that "They accuse me – *Me* – the present writer of / The present poem – of – I know not what" (7. 3). *Blackwoods* also made its critique retroactive, recoiling from its earlier seduction by the hermeneutic of intimacy. Asserting that a man who had now revealed his hidden interior in such a way could never have been sincere before, the journal was disgusted by "the insulting deceit which has been practised upon us":

> We look back with a mixture of wrath and scorn to the delight with which we suffered ourselves to be filled by one who, all the while he was furnishing us with delight must, we cannot doubt it, have been mocking us with a cruel mockery[.]
>
> (RR I, 145)

The rhetoric of sincerity was here reversed to condemn Byron for having been insincere. The critic traced Byron's secretly malignant intentions: "the great genius of the man seems to have been throughout exerted to its utmost strength, in devising every possible method of pouring scorn upon every element of good or noble nature in the hearts of his readers" (RR I, 144). Byron joked that, "Some have accused me of a strange design / Against the creed and morals of the land, / And trace it in this poem every line" (4. 5). But he was also concerned that this canting condemnation of his hidden-yet-legible character would be enforced with legal sanctions:

> [T]he third & fourth Cantos of Don J[uan] must be published anonymously & this merely because in the present state of Cant and hypocrisy in England – any freedom of expression on Creeds or manners – would prevent the author from asserting the guardianship of his own children – *this I know* – for on this ground the Chancellor decided on Shelley's case – and would be but too happy to do likewise by any other person obnoxious to the present rulers.
>
> (BLJ VII, 121)

The author of *Don Juan* would be assumed, in the present state of cant, to have rendered his hidden interior legible, and to have proven himself unfit to care for his child. In fact, the courts didn't need to read *Don Juan* to come to that decision. Ada had already been made a ward of court in 1817, without Byron's knowledge.[55]

Cant, then, is a kind of speech available to subjects who consider themselves and others to be structured around a hidden but legible interior. They legitimise their jargon by referring it to interior intentions and claim to be able to discern the hidden intentions of others, using this supposed knowledge to justify disciplinary measures. To oppose such a discourse would seem to call for "some Columbus of the moral seas", who, searching out the real motives of the canters, "Would show mankind their souls' Antipodes" (14. 101):

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[55] See Marchand, II, 685n and Malcolm Elwin, *Lord Byron's Family*, pp. 21-23. Correspondence about the possibility of making Ada a ward of court circulated among Lady Byron's friends and advisors from February 1816 until 3 February 1817, when her legal representative wrote to Byron's to inform him that Ada had been made a Ward in Chancery.

What "Antres vast and desarts idle," then
Would be discover'd in the human soul!
What Icebergs in the hearts of mighty men,
With Self-love in the centre as their Pole!
What Anthropophagi in nine of ten
Of those who hold the kingdoms in control!

(14. 102)

Playing a set of variations upon a speech from *Othello*, Byron imagines how such a moral adventurer would map the hidden interior of the modern subject, rendering it genuinely legible and revealing the dissonance between the canters' public statements and private motives. If both sides of the controversy surrounding *Don Juan* depended on a modern concept of the subject as both hidden and legible, then a moral Columbus might win the battle by discovering everyone's hidden motives and judging all public utterances accordingly. But, having provided the job description, Byron tells us – as I will show – that he's not the man for the job.

When Byron sets out to resist the cant condemnation of his work, his tactics move away from the modern concept of the subject as hidden yet legible. Byron frequently presents existence as a riddle in *Don Juan*, relishing the impossibility of solving "this unriddled wonder, / The World" (11. 3). His poem is itself a riddle concealing "mystic diapasons" and "much which could not be appreciated / In any manner by the uninitiated" (14. 22). He is not much good at solving riddles, "I'm not Oedipus, and life's a Sphinx" (13. 12), but in Canto Nine he writes a riddle that is easy to solve:

Oh, thou "teterrima Causa" of all "belli" –
Thou gate of Life and Death – thou nondescript!
Whence is our exit and our entrance, – well I
May pause in pondering how all Souls are dipt
In thy perennial fountain: – how man *fell*, I
Know not, since Knowledge saw her branches stript
Of her first fruit, but how he falls and rises
Since, thou hast settled beyond all surmises.

Some call thee "the worst Cause of war," but I
Maintain thou art the *best*: for after all
From thee we come, to thee we go, and why
To get at thee not batter down a wall,

> Or waste a world? Since no one can deny
> Thou dost replenish worlds both great and small:
> With, or without thee, all things at a stand
> Are, or would be, thou Sea of Life's dry Land!
>
> (9. 55-56)

Here the written words conceal behind their multiple *entendres* and Horatian tag an unwritten truth, which is apparently the answer to everything. Its unwriteability requires us to penetrate the surface games of the text to get to the riddle's scarcely hidden solution, which is mockingly presented as the solution to all life's riddles, the utmost profundity the text has to offer. The incomplete quotation from Horace, "cunnus taeterrima belli / Causa" supplies the missing word with a gentlemanly disregard for accuracy.[56] But you don't need the benefits of a classical education to solve the riddle. What holds for the modern subject and enables the controversy surrounding *Don Juan* holds for this text too: the hidden key is everywhere legible on the surface.

The concealed word that answers this riddle is the key to Byron's counterblast to cant and reverses his earlier gloomy diagnosis of the age in an 1819 letter to Douglas Kinnaird:

> I have written about a hundred stanzas of a third Canto – but it is damned modest – the outcry has frightened me. – I had such projects for the Don – but the *Cant* is so much stronger than *Cunt* – now a days, – that the benefit of experience in a man who had well weighed the worth of both monosyllables – must be lost to despairing posterity.
>
> (BLJ VI, 232)

With his apostrophe to the "cunt" – a thing as nondescript as his "non-descript and ever varying rhyme" (7. 2) – Byron reverses the terms of his earlier complaint and sets out to make cunt stronger than cant. The joke is on those canting readers who were on the lookout for traces of Byron's hidden subjective interior. Their fascination with the intimate and concealed interior of the psychologised subject, expressed in the hermeneutic of intimacy, reappears here metamorphosed. Their refined concern is corporealised into a carnal prurience. While trying to uncover the hidden

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[56] Horace, *Satires*, I. iii. 107-08, in Horace, *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, ed. by H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1926), p. 40.

meanings of Byron's poetry they stumble upon a pudendum, and are brought face to face with the unwriteable word. The satire is extended two stanzas later, where a pun makes clear what had previously been, along with so much else, implicit. Catherine, who has been momentarily distracted by Juan's good looks, recovers herself and is described as a "great whole" (9. 58). The aporia in the text which arouses the reader's desire for meanings and which Byron crudely identifies with, or as, the cunt, is figured as a vacancy, a blank, a (w)hole. To cant means to pour forth a jargon which no one can understand but everyone feels they have to speak, with the possibility of turning it into a tool for coercion like Castlereagh's "parts of speech [...] Which none divine and every one obeys" (9. 49). To resist cant means changing a vowel and withholding a word which everyone can understand but no one must speak, which is comically portrayed as all-powerful but which coerces no one but the put-upon Juan, conscripted into service as Catherine's Imperial Favourite. To cant means making appeals to the hidden parts of the psyche. To resist cant means deflating its rhetoric by referring it to the hidden parts of the body. To cant means sharing the model of subjectivity that celebrity promotes. To resist cant, as this somatic riddle suggests and as I'll go on to show, can involve resisting elements of that model.

Writing against the modern understanding of the subject as possessing hidden yet legible interiority, Byron insists in the English cantos on the illegibility of his characters. These cantos are usually thought of as the most novelistic in the poem, where Byron slows the pace of narration, includes more detail, and moves towards more realistic characterisation. Some of the characters in the English cantos are given inner depths, and these "round" characters are set off against other "flat" characters. I will argue, however, that Byron's techniques of characterisation in the English cantos also call into question realist conventions and the model of subjectivity that both they and the apparatus of celebrity sponsor. When the Amundevilles open their house to the public in the hope of winning votes for Lord Henry in the forthcoming election, Juan, still shaken by his encounter with the "ghost", cuts an awkward figure among the guests:

They wondered how a young man so absurd
Lord Henry at his table should endure;
And this, and his not knowing how much oats
Had fallen last market, cost his host three votes.

(16. 89)

Juan retreats from conversation and, after exchanging charged glances with Aurora (16. 92), watches Adeline from a distance (16. 96). Taking no active part in these stanzas, Juan assumes the position that Ermarth ascribes to the narrator in free indirect discourse; "not absorbed in the world of forms but stand[ing] outside it, as if behind a lens."[57]

But while Juan the spectator conforms to this convention of realist narration, Adeline the spectacle does not conform to conventions of realist characterisation. "In realism," Ermarth writes, "points of view must intersect to create a uniform horizon", as a result, "differences in realism are always concordable, never irreducible; they invite us to reach for the inner dimension where differences are reconciled."[58] The variety of partial surface impressions must add up to a rounded whole. When Juan "cast[s] a glance / On Adeline while playing her grand role," she conspicuously fails to fit this model. Although in many ways she's realistic, Adeline refuses to do the one thing that Ermarth says the realistic character must do. She doesn't add up. Acting "all and every part / By turns", Adeline's "vivacious versatility" is too exuberant to allow Juan to get the measure of her selfhood (16. 97). The partial impressions do not add up to a whole subject, leaving her illegible subjectivity ungrasped. Adeline's protean role-playing is "merely what is called mobility" (16. 97). Mobility must be understood as an anti-realist tactic, creating characters who cannot be read according to realist conventions that require a consistent subject with a hidden yet legible identity. It is also an escape route from celebrity, enabling Byron continually to evade readings which would locate his subjectivity behind the text.[59]

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[57] Ermarth, p. 37.
[58] Ibid. pp. 36, 47.
[59] The narrator's mobility allows Byron to throw his readers off the scent with a series of misdirections; playfully admonishing them to "recollect the work is only fiction, / And that I sing of neither mine nor me, / Though every scribe, in some slight turn of diction, / Will hint allusions never *meant*" (11. 88). The narrator claims to have been inside a harem which "I

Unable to pin her down, Juan "began to feel / Some doubt how much of Adeline was *real*" (16. 96).

Although Adeline's appearances seem disintegrated, there's no doubt that there's a "soul" behind them. In one of those big things that pass inside little brackets, Juan sees her "(Betraying only now and then her soul / By a look scarce perceptibly askance / Of weariness or scorn)" (16. 96). Adeline's appearances may not be concordable in the manner of a realist character's, but they do conceal a soul, a hidden interiority which can be glimpsed now and then. What Byron chooses to emphasise, however, is the difficulty of catching a glimpse of her soul, the fact that it is "scarce[ly] perceptibl[e]". The terms of the debate that *Don Juan* conducts with the modern concept of subjectivity sponsored by realism and celebrity may seem unfamiliar, so natural has that concept come to seem. The implicit debate is not concerned with whether the subject's hidden interiority exists, nor with whether its nature is innate or constructed.[60] Byron does not seem to doubt human inwardness – his narrator has an "internal spirit" which "cut[s] a caper" and Juan has an "internal ghost" which steels him for his encounter with the external one (10. 3; 16. 118). Rather, he disputes the extent to which the interior is legible to onlookers and the claim that being able to read it is a sign of cultural superiority. Only "docile esquires" (16. 101) imagine that they can read Adeline:

> Some praised her beauty; others her great grace;
> The warmth of her politeness, whose sincerity
> Was obvious in each feature of her face,
> Whose traits were radiant with the rays of verity.
>
> (16. 102)

Duped by their own cant, the foolish folk take Adeline to be legible, believing her hidden interior to radiate forth in perfectly ingenuous appearances.

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might describe, as I have seen it all" (which Byron hadn't) (6. 51). He says he speaks no Italian (which Byron did speak) "having no teachers" (2. 165). And in the midst of the densest web of allusions to Byron's marriage, the narrator says, "I never married" (1. 53).

[60] I therefore think Kim Ian Michasiw is mistaken to present *Don Juan* as promoting a social constructivist understanding of the self in opposition to conventionally Romantic essentialism. See Kim Ian Michasiw, 'The Social Other: *Don Juan* and the Genesis of the Self', *Mosaic*, 22, no. 2 (1989), 29-48.

Byron, contrary to realist convention, does not suggest that a more discerning class of readers could penetrate the secrets of Adeline's subjective interior more reliably. Instead, he argues that discernment lies in acknowledging the interior's illegibility.

When the narrator turned his attention to Adeline three cantos previously, he described her in very different terms from the "docile esquires". The narrator rejects the normative "common place" image of a volcano which "beneath the snow [...] holds the lava". He breaks off in the middle of the stock image, because "I hate to hunt down a tired metaphor" and goes on to produce an alternative (13. 36). In his commentary, McGann writes that this is "a good example of the kind of stylistic renovation Byron was trying to bring about with *Beppo* and *D[on] J[uan]*" (CPW V, 756). But Byron's half-serious claim that "I now deduce [...] moral lessons" suggests how much is at stake in his style (13. 38). When Byron rejects the volcano image he rejects his own previous image of himself as a man whose poetry is "the lava of the imagination whose eruption prevents an earth-quake" (BLJ III, 179).[61] He had imagined poetry as the product of a subject whose hidden depths continually poured out over the surface, saving him from insanity. Figuring the subject as structured around a hidden interior which poured legibly forth in his writing, Byron's ejaculatory eruption outdid Wordsworth's spontaneous overflow. The new metaphor he conjures up rewrites assumptions about subjectivity:

> I'll have another figure in a trice: –
> What say you to a bottle of champagne?
> Frozen into a very vinous ice,
> Which leaves few drops of that immortal rain,
> Yet in the very centre, past all price,
> About a liquid glassful will remain;
> And this is stronger than the strongest grape
> Could e'er express in its expanded shape:
>
> 'Tis the whole spirit brought to a quintessence;
> And thus the chilliest aspects may concentre
> A hidden nectar under a cold presence.

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[61] Francis Jeffrey also described Byron as "a volcano in the heart of our land" in his review of *Childe Harold* Canto Three (RR II, 866).

> And such are many – though I only meant her,
> From whom I now deduce these moral lessons,
> On which the Muse has always sought to enter: –
> And your cold people are beyond all price,
> When once you have broken their confounded ice.
>
> (13. 37-38)

Byron substitutes for the volcano metaphor an image that emphasises the difficulty of getting to subjective interiority. The unfacetious Biblical allusion and the significant Byronic word "concentre" signal the importance of this passage, and the two "A"s in Adeline Amundeville's name, as also in Aurora's, indicate their importance for Byron.[62] With a pun on "spirit", Byron suggests that the truth of Adeline's subjectivity may be frozen inside her, inaccessible to onlookers and illegible to would-be readers. He praises this concealed centre as "hidden nectar", but he doesn't claim to know anything about it. The ice confounds his attempts to know Adeline, and he suggests that this is an accurate description of "many" people. While Adeline's subjective interior remains unknown to man, it seems that Aurora's may be known only to God.[63] She "kept her heart serene within its zone", where "Her spirit seemed as seated on a throne / Apart from the surrounding world" (15. 47). Her depths are not easily read:

> The worlds beyond this world's perplexing waste
> Had more of her existence, for in her
> There was a depth of feeling to embrace
> Thoughts, boundless, deep, but silent too as Space.
>
> (16. 48)

Fitz-Fulke acts as the foil to these two, emphasising by contrast the difficulty of reading their inner depths. Unlike Adeline and Aurora, she is a character "whose mind, / If she had any, was upon her face" (16. 49).[64]

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[62] All the most important women in Byron's life seem to have had two "A"s in their name: Augusta, Annabella, Ada and Allegra.
[63] The most extended reading of Aurora's significance in *Don Juan* is provided by Bernard Beatty, *Byron's Don Juan* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 137-219.
[64] Deirdre Lynch suggests how "the new modes of reading and writing that ushered in round characters were defined through representations of the residual categories – the category of patently significant ("flat") characters, as well as the category of superficial readers who could be counted on to overvalue those characters." Lynch, p. 156.

In his portrayal of the three central female characters in the English cantos, then, Byron accepted the assumption shared by the discourses of realism and celebrity that the most interesting people are those with hidden depths. But he resisted the idea that such depths are legible. While cant worked by claiming to be able to read character and by ceaselessly referring to its own impeccable motives, Byron's narrator refused to penetrate subjectivity and probe those depths.[65] He professed to "hate a motive like a lingering bottle" (14. 58) and asserted that:

> 'Tis sad to hack into the roots of things,
> They are so much intertwisted with the earth:
> So that the branch a goodly verdure flings,
> I reck not if an acorn gave it birth.
> To trace all actions to their secret springs
> Would make indeed some melancholy mirth;
> But that is not at present my concern[.]
>
> (14. 59)

Rather than probing for concealed motives, the narrator prefers the exterior. "I say, in my slight way I may proceed / To play upon the surface of Humanity" (15. 60). He therefore refuses to become the Columbus of the moral seas because that would mean playing into cant's hands by accepting its premises about subjectivity. When Murray wanted to go to court for an injunction against piracy, Byron thought the action would fail because the court would rule that, as a blasphemous or seditious work, *Don Juan* was not entitled to the protection of copyright. "[T]he cry is up – and cant is up" he noted wryly, and remarked "I have not the patience [...] to contend with the fellows in their own slang" (BLJ VI, 256-57). Insisting that even to engage the canters on their own terms required an effort of translation that he was not prepared to make, Byron rejected the premises of the debate. While cant assumed that the subject's interior was legible in order to argue about whether an individual's motives were good or bad, Byron rejected that assumption and chose instead to satirise the search for interior truth in his

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[65] Jean Hall comments, "where the other Romantics believe that this turn toward innerness is both possible and desirable, Byron tends to doubt both the feasibility and attractiveness of the interior self. He tends to avoid self-exploration because it appears to him a futile process, an exercise in self-delusion." Jean Hall, 'The Evolution of the Surface Self: Byron's Poetic Career', *Keats-Shelley Journal,* 36 (1987), 134-57 (p. 135).

riddling bawdry, to foreground the illegibility of his most interesting characters, and to refuse the task of trying to probe subjects in search of motives.

Once again, Byron's thinking may have been informed by his concurrent reading of Montaigne. Montaigne insists on the privacy of the interior, writing that "we must reserve a back-room, wholly our own, and entirely free, wherein to fix our liberty, our principal retreat and solitude" (I, 290). He asserts that this subjective interiority is no one else's business, but is a place where "we have converse with ourselves, and so privately, that no knowledge or communication of any foreign concern, be admitted" (I, 290). And in a page that Byron marked "with a *triple* dog's-ear"[66] Montaigne makes two assertions that illuminate Byron's thinking about subjectivity:

> We hear but of two or three ancients who have beaten this road; and yet we cannot say whether they did it exactly like this, as we only know their names: no man since has gone in their track; it is a ticklish subject, and more than it seems to be, to follow so rambling a path as that of the mind, to penetrate the dark profundities of its intricate windings, to choose and lay hold of the many minute quavers of its agitations; and it is a new and extraordinary amusement that takes us off from the common, yea, and the most commendable, employments of the world. [...] There is no description so difficult, nor really so useful, as that of a man's self[.]
>
> (I, 491)

Firstly, Montaigne asserts the extreme difficulty of trying to decipher one's own inner depths, let alone those of others. It is a thorny undertaking, which involves one in knotty pathways of motivation and dark recesses of subjectivity. Secondly, he asserts the historicity of that enterprise. Two or three of the Ancients undertook projects of subjective exploration which may have been quite dissimilar to Montaigne's. He knows of no one else who has turned his or her gaze on the hidden interior of the subject so fixedly. He seems to be embarking on an eccentric and novel enterprise. At a period when the modern conception of the subject was becoming normalised, fostering the assumption that all subjects had a hidden interior

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[66] Hunt, p. 26.

which could be known as a matter of course, this passage may have alerted Byron to the fact that this idea was not ahistorical.

In the essay 'Of Repentance', Montaigne gently mocked those who would connect interior reality to exterior appearance, asking "who does not give Tamerlane large eye-brows, wide nostrils, a dreadful face, and a stature beyond measure, according to the conception he has formed from the report of his name?" (III, 9). And elsewhere he is more forthright, asserting that "It is not in the sphere of the maturest understanding to judge us simply by our external actions; it must fathom the very soul, and find out the springs that give it motion; but, as this is a dangerous and sublime undertaking, I wish that fewer persons would attempt it" (I, 438). These statements suggest the tension that Richard Regosin has traced in the *Essays* between two trends in early modern thought. Firstly physiognomy, which finds the self written in the face, and secondly an "opposite trend" which brings "the correspondence of outer and inner man" into question.[67] "Few contemporary figures" Regosin notes, "had a stronger sense of the variance of outward appearance and inwardness than Montaigne, particularly in the subject that most interests him, man[.]"[68] Montaigne, like Byron, draws attention to the difficulties attending an understanding of the subject as hidden yet legible. The difference is that when Montaigne wrote, that understanding was only just starting to emerge, whereas when Byron wrote, it was rapidly becoming the only concept of the subject available.

Byron's dissatisfaction with the coercive rhetoric of sincerity, which cant relied on and the modern notion of subjectivity enabled, led him to turn away from his earlier enthusiasm for Rousseau and towards Montaigne. Byron had read Rousseau with Shelley in Switzerland, and that shared enthusiasm had left its mark on *Childe Harold* Canto Three. Rousseau set himself in opposition to Montaigne, claiming that the sincerity of his *Confessions* was much franker than that of Montaigne's *Essays*. Rousseau

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[67] Richard Regosin, *The Matter of My Book: Montaigne's* Essais *as the Book of the Self* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 178.
[68] Ibid. p. 181.

wrote that he "had always laughed at the false naiveté of Montaigne who, while making a pretence of admitting his flaws, takes great care to give himself only amiable ones".[69] While Rousseau is mentioned three times in the published text of *Don Juan*, which is twice more than Montaigne, he is never treated with the enthusiasm Byron had expressed in *Childe Harold* Canto Three.[70] Rousseau's confessional outpourings, in which the self ceaselessly made itself legible, had been displaced by Montaigne's judicious scepticism, which stressed the difficulty of self-exploration and the illegibility of the interior. It is my contention that Byron's turn from Rousseau to Montaigne, from volcanoes to frozen champagne and from legible bodies like the Giaour's to illegible souls like Aurora's are all of a piece. They constitute a turn away from the modern ways of thinking about subjectivity on which celebrity relied and which it helped to promote.

IV

When Byron turned away from modern subjectivity in resistance to the apparatus of celebrity, he turned back to the early modern period. His twenty-first century readers, however, have somewhere else to turn. Since Foucault, in the very last pages of *The Order of Things*, wrote, "man is neither the oldest nor the most constant problem that has been posed for human knowledge" but is rather "an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end", commentators have been quick to report man's demise.[71] While new characterisations of subjectivity may not describe the self-experience of most individuals, in the late modern age established assumptions about the nature of "man" are being challenged. If modernity is now shifting into its late phase, then Montaigne may suggest ways in which early modern and late modern ideas of subjectivity resemble each other.

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[69] Rousseau, V, 433. See also p. 586: "Montaigne portrays himself in a good likeness but in profile. Who knows whether some scar on the cheek or an eye put out on the side he hides from us might not totally change his physiognomy." Lionel Trilling writes that Rousseau's "expressions of scorn for the show of sincerity made by Montaigne are recurrent and unqualified." Trilling, p. 59.

[70] See *Don Juan* 7. 14; 8. 53 and 14. 75. Rousseau is also mentioned in the unincorporated stanzas for Canto Two.

[71] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1970), pp. 386-87.

Dudley Marchi has tentatively suggested that "The *Essais* stand perhaps as a late-sixteenth-century sign-post to the postmodern age," and that "It can perhaps be put forth that Montaigne is more postmodern than modern."[72] This provides ways for the analyst of modernity to make ends meet. Comparing Byron's turn from modern to early-modern subjectivity with the recent turn from modern to late-modern subjectivity may seem at first anachronistic.[73] But in fact it makes visible the historicity of modernity, showing it to be a phenomenon with a beginning in which a complex of ideas about the subject coalesced and an end in which those ideas have once again become disjoint. *Don Juan* presents examples of what Jerome Christensen calls "*hopeful* anachronism", drawing on early modern ideas in order to think outside the increasingly normative categories of modern thought about subjectivity.[74] The two attributes of modern subjectivity that celebrity promotes and relies on have been decentred in the late modern period by new working practices and technological innovation. Aspects of the debate on the nature of subjectivity that were closing when Byron wrote *Don Juan* are opening once again, and opening new perspectives on the poem.

New working practices provide some writers with evidence of a challenge to the developmental narrative that characterises modern subjectivity. The proliferation of short term or zero-hours contracts offering little job security, the threat of corporate downsizing, the emergence of

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[72] Dudley M. Marchi, *Montaigne Among the Moderns: Receptions of the Essais* (Providence RI: Berghahn Books, 1994), pp. 280, 308.

[73] Earl Ingersoll uses an ahistorical conception of the postmodern to produce an anachronistic reading of *Don Juan*. See Earl Ingersoll, 'Byron's *Don Juan* and the Postmodern,' *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 33 (1997), 302-14. I prefer the term "late modern", but my understanding is close to that of Cascardi, who takes "postmodernism" in "a dual sense: first, postmodernism represents the consequence of tendencies embedded within the paradigm of modernity; and second, postmodernism is the site of those transformations that remain open to us through a re-interpretation of the modern age." Cascardi, p. 14.

[74] Christensen validates anachronism as the alternative to a deterministic historicism. The wilful disruption of temporal continuity, as when Byron mixes three time frames in *Don Juan*, or uses early modern ideas to combat the hegemony of modern ideas, involves "the assertion of the historical as that which could not be over because it has not yet really happened." The recent antitrust action against Microsoft, according to Christensen, is "a *hopeful* anachronism, a decision to make use of whatever tool is at hand in the face of uncertainties regarding innovation [and] standardization." Christensen, *Romanticism at the End of History*, pp. 25, 188.

"portfolio careers", ever-longer periods of retirement and the expectation that people will change their skills base several times in their working life, makes it harder to think of life as a linear narrative of development. Naomi Klein examines the "increasingly tenuous relationships to employment for many workers," created by factors "including self-employment, McJobs and outsourcing, as well as part-time and temp labor."[75] Such employment practices impact on the sense of self of individuals accustomed to an identity heavily dependent on a linear career path imagined as a developmental narrative. Though cloaked in a rhetoric of worker empowerment, Klein argues that they lead to an "internalised state of perpetual transience."[76] Richard Sennett claims that these flexible employment practices bring about a "corrosion of character" involving a decisive shift away from the worldly asceticism of Weberian man. The constant change of a "flexible political economy" means that "the present becomes discontinuous from the past."[77] The old developmental story of deferred gratification becomes impossible: "Time's arrow is broken: it has no trajectory in a continually reengineered, routine-hating, short term political economy."[78] In the working conditions of late modernity, according to these authors, the modern expectation that subjectivity be understood as a developmental narrative may no longer be normative.

New technologies have been theorised as presenting a challenge to the hidden-yet-legible interiority of the modern subject. "What has been striking in recent times," Roy Porter notes, "is the rise of new philosophies challenging the very idea, ensconced since the Renaissance, of a core (if elusive) inner personal identity."[79] This theoretical shift owes much to the emergence of new computing technologies, which create what Sherry Turkle

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[75] Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (London: Flamingo, 2001), xxi. Trade unionist Dan Gallin defines a McJob as "a low skill, low pay, high stress, exhausting and unstable job." Cited Klein, p. 237. The novelist Douglas Coupland defines a McJob as "a low-pay, low-prestige, low-dignity, low-benefit, no-future job in the service sector. Frequently considered a satisfying career choice by people who have never held one." Douglas Coupland, *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), p. 5.
[76] Klein, p. 233.
[77] Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character*, pp. 99, 48.
[78] Ibid. p. 98.
[79] Porter, 'Introduction' in *Rewriting the Self*, p. 11.

calls "a nascent culture of simulation [which] is affecting our ideas about mind, body, self and machine."[80] Mediated interactions with other users of contemporary communications technology, using various personae, enable, according to Turkle, "the creation of an identity so fluid and multiple that it strains the limits of the notion."[81] This is made possible by the ubiquity of the Windows graphical user interface and the ways of thinking it encourages. "[I]n the daily practice of many computer users," Turkle asserts, "windows have become a powerful metaphor for thinking about the self as a multiple, distributed system. [...] The life practice of windows is that of a decentered self that exists in many worlds and plays many roles at the same time."[82] The conceptual modifications that Turkle claims new technology has brought about are comparable to the new ways of thinking about subjectivity associated with changing attitudes towards drug use. Porter notes that "new drugs [...] may herald a new age in which the chemical modification of the brain calls into question old assumptions about defined individual character."[83] Identities partly formed through the medium of new technologies and modified by psychotropic drugs may not conform to the idea of a hidden interiority made legible to others. Instead they are bespoke, decentred, fragmented, improvisational and inconsistent. For those writers who aim to describe late modern identities, the model of the hidden-yet-legible subject may have outlived its usefulness.

In the late modern period, then, the two aspects of subjectivity that Romantic celebrity helped to promote have lost some of their normative force. But for a long time they were part of the only available model of subjectivity. This "modern" model claimed to provide a way of engaging subjectivity that was natural and timeless, making it the only valid approach to literary characterisation and giving it the appearance of political neutrality.

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[80] Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1996), p. 10.
[81] Ibid. p. 12.
[82] Ibid. p. 14.
[83] Porter, 'Introduction' in *Rewriting the Self*, p. 12. Sadie Plant provides a fascinating and readable history of literature and drug use from the Romantic period onwards. But acknowledging the impact of psychotropic drugs on conceptions of selfhood need not mean endorsing the illimitate materialism with which Plant flirts. Sadie Plant, *Writing on Drugs* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999).

The model's hegemony hid the politics of characterisation in *Don Juan* from post-Romantic readers, but it is now possible to see once again what is at stake in the ways Byron presents his characters and in his political polemics. The abuses of power that Byron indicted – including the imposition of judicial sanctions against private moral violations while cant allowed good intentions to excuse atrocious consequences, and the use of a debased rhetoric of sincerity to support disciplinary intervention – were connected in different ways to the normalisation of modern conceptions of subjectivity. When he populated his poem with non-developmental, mobile and illegible subjects, Byron was rejecting the assumptions on which these abuses rested and resisting the increasing hegemony of the modern subject. Those acts of resistance were to a large extent produced by Byron's experience of the celebrity apparatus. The shift in his understanding of subjectivity between the Giaour's legible depths and *Don Juan*'s freewheeling across surfaces was motivated in important ways by his distaste for the assumptions about selfhood that enabled his celebrity. Byron's attempts in *Don Juan* to think outside the categories of modern subjectivity display his fascination with the kinds of person a celebrity could *not be*, a satirical resistance to the ways of thinking about subjectivity that celebrity promoted and a refusal to play by the rules that had shaped his career. Only within a history of celebrity does the significance of those efforts appear.

Writing that history entails the recognition that elements of the understanding of subjectivity that dominated modernity became normative not because they were simply consonant with absolute reality. Rather, their dominance was sponsored by an overdetermining collection of interests and contingencies, including those involved in the rise of modern celebrity culture. Celebrity, as one of modernity's characteristic industries, relied on elements of modern subjectivity to secure commercial success in an overcrowded cultural marketplace. Much celebrity hagiography recounts the marvellous but reassuring discovery that celebrities are really just like the rest of us, but studying celebrity means inverting the terms of that commonplace. Celebrities aren't like us: we're like them. They appear developmental and legible not because that's naturally our common

condition but because those features enable them to be branded memorably and marketed effectively. So effectively, in fact, that once cultural consumers bought the products, they also bought into the ideas, and started to understand themselves with reference to the subjectivity of celebrities. Celebrity selfhood does not simply reflect an understanding of subjectivity that became generalised at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but helped to create elements of that understanding.

This study began in fascination and frustration. I began writing because I wanted to understand why I found everything about Byron fascinating, and because I was frustrated that the discourse of literary criticism, as conventionally constituted, could not admit that fascination as a legitimate object of enquiry. I ended up writing about an apparatus of fascination – a vast cultural assemblage of industrial technologies, driving ambitions and private pleasures that coalesced at a moment in the past, no less distinct for being distant, and that continues to structure the work of some and the pleasure of many in the present. As that apparatus colonises new areas of endeavour and pleasure, including literature and its study, it should no longer be possible to remain blind to its history, nor to dismiss it as a cheapened and debased form of recognition. The attention we pay to celebrities rebounds onto ourselves, and deserves scrutiny. In a culture that remains fascinated by celebrity, we should recognise that the modern celebrity apparatus took shape in the Romantic period, and understand Byron as one of its earliest subjects and most astute critics.

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- The Lovelace Papers, on deposit in the Bodleian Library
- The Murray Archive
- The British Library